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Sealing The Cracks of The Educational Pipeline: Counterstories That Reveal Cultural Resiliency and Collective Responsibility in Latinas' K-16 Success

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SEALING THE CRACKS OF THE EDUCATIONAL PIPELINE: COUNTERSTORIES THAT REVEAL CULTURAL RESILIENCY AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY IN LATINAS' K-16 SUCCESS

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Dissertation Abstract

Sealing The Cracks of The Educational Pipeline: Counterstories That Reveal Cultural Resiliency and Collective Responsibility in Latinas' K-16 Success

The purpose of this qualitative research is to discover and describe the successes and institutional barriers along the educational pipeline for Latinas who are the first in their families to have successfully completed their undergraduate degrees. No study to date has looked specifically at Latinas through each level of K-16 schooling. There is a lack of research that focuses specifically on Latinas' experiences through each stage of development in the K-16 educational pipeline, particularly in elementary or secondary school, onto completion of an undergraduate degree. Due to the lack of literature that focuses specifically on Latinas, there is a need for research that includes the unique elements of gender such as gender role socialization and stereotyping under the context of student retention and successful completion of a baccalaureate degree.

My methodological approach is qualitative narrative research using counterstories as a strategy of inquiry. I utilized Critical Race Feminism (CRF) as my theoretical rationale as it serves as a tool to examine the complexities and fluid identities of Latinas' stories. I had dialogues with nine Latinas who were the first in their families to have successfully completed their undergraduate degrees.

The results of this study find that throughout childhood, many participants' parents taught their children how to overcome race and socioeconomic barriers through their verbal encouragement, parents' stories of struggles, role modeling of a strong work ethic, parents' value of education, and parents motivating their children to have a more

comfortable and financially stable life. Cultural resiliency gave participants the impetus to strive for success in education and also inspired a sense of collective responsibility to transcend obstacles they faced throughout the educational pipeline. As college educated adults, the participants continue to be influenced by collective responsibility in their choice of careers, helping out their families and communities, and instilling the importance of higher education into their younger family members, friends, and peers in their respective communities.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Angela Leslie Shaw	March 19, 2012
Candidate	Date

Dissertation Committee

Dr. Emma Fuentes	March 19, 2012
Chairperson	Date
Dr. Shabnam Koirala-Azad	March 19, 2012
Second Reader	Date
Dr. Elena Flores	March 19, 2012
Third Reader	Date

To Andre' who faithfully nurtures and relishes my dreams as if they were his own

To my Mamacita whose sacrifices, fierce determination and unconditional love inspired me to exceed my own academic aspirations

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CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

As a Latina and the first in my family to earn a baccalaureate degree, I know the challenges of navigating through an unfamiliar academic system. Despite these challenges, I have been inspired to pursue a doctoral degree and teach at the collegiate level. Throughout my educational experiences from elementary school through obtaining my undergraduate degree, there were many ways that educational institutions tried to push me out. In high school, I was discouraged from taking upper division math and science classes and encouraged to take typing and home economics classes as if to prepare me for impending motherhood or a future secretarial career. When I think of all the times when I could have failed and fallen through the cracks, I am reminded of my main motivation to persevere, my immigrant mother. She consistently struggled to make ends meet and stressed the importance of a good college education as a bridge to success. Those efforts helped me on my own journey through the educational pipeline.

When looking at the numbers of Latino/a youth who drop out somewhere along the educational pipeline, the statistics are astounding. Yosso (2006) defines the educational pipeline as a system of interrelated institutions where students move from one level to the next. The journey is varied and determined by school structures, policies, and culture. Howard (2007) describes the educational pipeline as a metaphor:

> The idea of a pipeline in its most basic definition is that it is a mechanism that allows the successful matriculation of any material, object, or individual to pass through a particular area to another. The matriculation through the pipeline is contingent upon each of the areas of the pipe to be unobstructed and working in proper order, which allows for a free-flowing exchange from point to point. (p. 18)

The successful culture of the school and its ability to reach underrepresented students depends on the lack of obstructions in the educational pipeline, which is key for student retention and completion. Yosso finds that:

> Only 26 of every 100 Chicana/o elementary school students continue on to college with 17 of the 26 students starting at community college. Nationally, 70% of Chicanas/os who enroll in community colleges aspire to transfer to a 4-year college or university. However, one of these students makes it to a 4-year college. Only 7 students out of the original 26 graduate with a baccalaureate degree. (p. 99)

Furthermore, Latinas face greater odds due to a myriad of barriers related to gender, race, and class issues as well as sometimes being the first in their family to attend college. My research focus is on those Latinas who are the first in their families to complete a baccalaureate degree and how they transcended past obstacles to achieve academic success throughout the educational pipeline. Specifically, this qualitative study hopes to uncover the various factors that lead to Latinas' successful educational experiences, culminating in a collegiate degree.

Statement of the Problem

Latino/as encounter numerous barriers on the pathway to college. According to Yosso and Solórzano (2006), the leaks in the Latino/a educational pipeline are systemic and start with the inequities found in K-12 schools. The authors emphasize the fact that many Latino/as attend racially segregated schools with new and often untrained teachers. Dilapidated buildings, a lack of resources for new classroom materials and inadequate bilingual programs exacerbate the obstacles Latino/as face in education. Additionally, Yosso and Solórzano have found that Latino/a students continue to be tracked in remedial and/or vocational classes. This in many ways sends the message to Latino/as that college

is not a viable option. Valenzuela's (1999) research found that a lack of resources, tracking, and lowered expectations set Latino/as up for educational failure, rather than success.

Latinas are severely underrepresented in high school and college. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2010a), Latinas have the highest high school dropout rate at 16.1% in 2008. Additionally, Latinas' college completion rates are 8.1 % in the 2008-2009 academic year, which falls significantly lower than White females at 71.5 % and Black females at 9.8% (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010b). Ginorio and Huston (2001) assert that a college education is a gateway to expanded career opportunities and increased financial possibilities. The researchers found that Latinas with baccalaureate degrees earned 82% more than those with high school diplomas. It is important to look at the obstacles Latinas' face in completing undergraduate degrees and how societal racism and sexism contribute to these barriers.

Latino/as who defy these odds and make it to college continue to experience institutional neglect. According to Yosso and Solórzano (2006), many Latino/as begin their college studies at a community college with the hopes of transferring to a four-year college; however, less than 10% actually make it. Those who are able to transfer to a four-year university are often met with racial discrimination from peers and professors and a lack of resources and mentors to guide them through the college going process. These feelings of alienation are intensified when students are the first in their family to attend college and are trying to learn how to navigate the university system. Furthermore, Wycoff (1996) affirms that Latinas specifically may have a harder time

navigating the educational pipeline and succeeding in college, due to stereotypes and discrimination based on their gender and race.

Although there are studies that focus on the Latino/as experience along the K-16 educational pipeline such as Yosso's (2006) investigation, there is a general lack of research that focus specifically on Latinas' experiences through this same pipeline, particularly in elementary or secondary school. Due to the lack of literature that focuses specifically on Latinas, there is a need for research that includes the unique elements of gender such as gender role socialization and stereotyping within the context of student retention and successful completion of a baccalaureate degree.

Gender is one of the first important signifiers in identity development and gender role socialization. Wood (2001) describes social learning theory as a recurrent process of children observing the world around them and then imitating the behaviors they see, based on their gender identity. Research reveals that parents treat their female and male children differently in the way they hold and interact with their infants, the toys and activities children are exposed to, and the type of behaviors that receive praise (Block & Block, 2006; Lips, 1989; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Wood, 2001). These researchers also found that many parents praised boys for being aggressive or assertive; whereas, they reinforced girls to be more passive by setting more boundaries for them in terms of parental supervision, limiting active play, and restricting their time to explore outside. Boys are given more leeway to explore the world outside, which reinforces their adventurous sides and enhances future risk taking and problem solving skills. Block and Block (2006) concludes that these sex roles reinforce internalized messages that girls

need to be protected and are vulnerable; whereas, boys grow up believing they are the protectors and that they have mastery over their world, that they can make a difference.

Additionally, these differences in gender role stereotyping mirror discrepancies in the school environment and classroom. Peers provide examples of sex role stereotyping by observing and mimicking behaviors and playtime activities from others of the same sex (Lips, 1989; Sadker& Sadker, 1994, Witt, 2000; Wood, 2001). Research has also found that many teachers unintentionally reproduce these biases through classroom interactions and teaching practices (American Association of University Women [AAUW], 1999; Orenstein, 1994; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Studies have concluded that teachers interact more with males and ask them more probing questions to insight critical thinking (AAUW, 1999; Duffy, Warren, & Walsh, 2001; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). On the other hand, females are praised more often for being compliant and quiet in the classroom. Additionally, girls are still getting the idea that math and/or science fields are not for them. Hill, Corbett, and St. Rose (2010) concluded that girls continue to be severely underrepresented in college majors such as physics, engineering, and computer science. Majoring in these fields can lead to lucrative salaries and high growth careers where talented people are in high demand and jobs are more secure.

When boys are given more attention and intellectually challenged in the classroom girls' self-esteem and assertiveness can falter, especially in high school. Research by Kilbourne (2000) and Pipher (1994) shows that adolescent girls are vulnerable in high school due to media messages that focus on beauty and physical thinness. Many young girls become consumed by these images and seek popularity in school, taking away energy from academics. Gender role stereotyping is so powerful due

to its overwhelming influences that reinforce these roles every day. Parents, peers, teachers, and the media all reproduce these differences in usually subtle and unconscious ways. Gender equity in classrooms is imperative for girls to feel empowered and validated so that they can have equal opportunities for career choices and college aspirations. The intersection of gender, race, and class further exacerbates girls' success or failure in education. Latinas may face additional pressures and stereotyping in schools due to societal racial prejudices and stereotypes about Latinas as a group.

Wycoff (1996) contends that like other women of color, Latinas face "double discrimination" due to gender and race. This is especially evident in the educational system, where gender and racial discrimination are pervasive within school culture, policies, and procedures. Rodriguez, Guido-DiBrito, & Torres, (2000) found that Latinas are treated differently as a result of racial bias and gender bias and face institutional marginalization due to pervasive racist ideologies on college campuses. Gloria, Castellanos, and Orozco (2005) determined that educational institutions produce an environment of cultural incongruity that undermines Latina academic persistence. These feelings of isolation from discrimination can cause Latinas to believe they are invisible and can permeate Latinas' college experience.

Feelings of invisibility can affect Latinas' performance and silence them in the classroom. Brown and Gilligan (1992) and Pipher (1994) have found that societal and educational sexism creates feelings of invisibility in young girls and this exclusion leads to girls' self-silencing. There has been extensive research regarding the silencing of females in education through gender role stereotyping by teachers and the classroom environment (AAUW, 1999; Orenstein, 1994; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Losey (1997)

found pervasive silencing in Mexican American students, particularly female students, in an English Composition class that contributed to patterns of silence in written work and classroom participation. Losey's (1997) data reveals that, "Mexican American women represented a majority in the class (47% of all students), yet they contributed only 12.5% of the initiations and 8% of the responses" (p. 150). In a study by Aguilar (1996), nearly half of Mexican American college students felt they had experienced sexism and racism.

The silencing and discrimination of females is exacerbated by socioeconomic status. Students who come from working class backgrounds have additional obstacles involving financial resources and fitting in with middle to upper class peers. It is easy to postulate that Latina women experience triple discrimination in regards to gender, race, and class. Segura (1990) illuminates the complexities of triple discrimination in her article by concluding, "Triple oppression, then, refers to the interplay among class, race, and gender, whose cumulative effects place women of color in a subordinate social and economic position relative to men of color and the majority white population" (p. 48). This discrimination precipitates a lack of options and social supports or networks that are vital to scholastic achievement.

These obstacles are compounded for undergraduate Latinas who are first generation college students. Rosas and Harmrick (2002) found that the Latinas in their study encountered frustration with their parents who could not show them or give them advice on adjusting to their new academic lives. Additionally, if parents or older siblings have never attended college, they are unable to assist first time students with survival skills in college to provide an understanding of certain situations where gender, race, and

class issues are challenged. Without the knowledge of how to navigate through higher education along with prejudicial injustices, college may seem like a daunting experience.

Despite these barriers, there is significant research that proves that a network of social ties can positively influence first generation underrepresented students into a college-going identity. Social capital was activated through peers (Meador, 2005; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999) and by caring institutions or classrooms (Garcia-Reid, 2007; Valdez, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999), or nurtured by maternal encouragement and support (Ceja, 2004; Gandara, 1995; Garcia, 2004; Garza, 1998; Gonzalez, Stoner, & Jovel, 2003). Garza (1998) found that Latina mothers, regardless of their level of education, universally supported their daughters in school. These positive influences are important to look at particularly with students who are the first in their families to attend college to find out what informal and/or formal social networks were used to ensure college retention and success.

I find this relevant to my own background, as my mom has always been my main source of support and reason I am a doctoral candidate today. She is a Peruvian immigrant, has a high school education and has worked two jobs at a time to support me as a single mother. She wanted me to have a better life, an easier life than she had, so her constant reassurances motivated me to seek higher education. My mom's tales of endless sacrifices and hard work inspired me to excel in academics. She always said, "I want you to be somebody." She also prefaced this by adding that I could be the President of the United States, or perhaps, just a doctor or a lawyer. She could not tell me how to get there, the tangible tools and advice on taking college track classes, the importance of the

SAT, or how to navigate the process of applying to college, but she gave me the verbal encouragement and motivation. It is vital to look at existing programs or other internal and/or external factors that have contributed to Latinas' success through the educational pipeline to find out how and why Latinas have succeeded in the academy.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research is to discover and describe the successes and institutional barriers along the educational pipeline for Latinas who are the first in their families to have successfully completed their undergraduate degrees. No study to date has looked specifically at Latinas through each level of K-16 schooling. Ginorio and Huston's (2001) research focused on an overview of Latinas in high school and college in regards to standardized testing, grades, classes taken in high school, and college major choices. The study investigated factors such as peers, family, English as a second language, and acculturation to gain a fuller insight in Latinas' participation and success in education. Other studies have looked at gender and race as institutional barriers for Latinas during their college experiences (Rodriguez, Guido-DiBrito, & Torres, 2000; Wycoff, 1996). These institutional factors can include societal prejudices, standardized testing, tracking of students, or less opportunities and educational resources for students who attend schools in lower socioeconomic areas.

It is important to note that "Latinas" is a broad term used to describe people of Latin American descent, but ignores the multiplicities of individual characteristics and experiences. Latinas is not a homogenous group as it encompasses women from a wide variety of nationalities, language, background, levels of acculturation, and generational, socio-economic, and immigration status. There is still validity in addressing Latinas as a

whole in research since Latinas are subjected to societal racism and sexism, regardless of their unique cultures and experiences. That is why it is imperative to counter deficit thinking with research about successful Latinas and my research will provide the first in counterstories of Latinas who have completed their undergraduate degrees while being the first in their families to graduate college.

Background and Need for the Study

Further research of the successes and barriers Latinas' face throughout the educational pipeline is paramount to understanding why they succeeded at the collegiate level and how they accomplished this as the first people in their families to do so. The variables that affect educational attainment are complex and not without challenges and sacrifices accompanying their progress. Determining these factors of how and why Latinas succeeded in college is possible through critical race theory (CRT). CRT is important in understanding how institutions maintain racist ideologies that can affect Latinas in higher education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2006). According to this theoretical framework, racism is embedded in American society and often times damaging racist and xenophobic ideas are considered normal and are widely accepted. Critical race theory in education is needed to challenge dominant ideologies and curriculum that typically excludes Latino/as (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Ladson-Billings (1998) finds that the dominant scripts in school curriculum celebrate the accomplishments of white males, while omitting or distorting the history and culture of people of color. This cultural or gender disconnection to school curriculum can lead to apathy in school (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997). If Latinas do not feel

connected to their college and their academic experiences, then they perceive their college environment negatively.

This alienation can be damaging to groups of underrepresented students who already feel inferior or invisible from societal discrimination. Research shows that Latino/a students can succeed in an educational environment where validation, high expectations, and caring exist (Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990; Valdes, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999). Students can fall to low expectations or rise to high expectations from their teacher or schools. Valenzuela (1999) describes traditional schooling as a subtractive process where students' social and cultural knowledge are stripped away from them. This inevitably leads to students' disengagement, as they feel disconnected and powerless in the classroom. Valenzuela reveals in her work that schools disrespect students; students then start to reject schooling, but not necessarily education. The preconceived assumptions are when students fail in school, that they are lazy, unintelligent, or their parents do not value education. Teachers and educational institutions rarely reflect on their own responsibilities. Valenzuela asserts:

> Stated differently, rather than students failing schools, schools fail students with a pedagogical logic that not only assures the ascendancy of a few, but also jeopardizes their access to those among them who are either academically strong or who belong to academically supportive networks. (p.30)

Our educational institutions tend to further marginalize students of color who are already feeling inferior due to societal discrimination. The complexities of educational bias in schools needs to be further explored and how Latinas overcame these obstacles is important in understanding the internal or external factors that led to Latinas' success through the educational pipeline.

Theoretical Rationale

One way to counter gender and racial stereotyping for marginalized groups of people is through counterstories and critical race theory. Critical race counterstories are a method of retelling dominant stories that typically distort images and identities of racially and socially marginalized people (Bernal, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2006). Bernal (1998) discusses the importance of people telling stories that are usually not heard as a tool for analyzing and challenging stereotypes or ideologies of people who are marginalized. Giving underrepresented people a voice is an important first step in transformation and empowerment. Ladson-Billings calls this voice, "naming your reality as a way that critical race theory links form and substance in scholarship" (p. 13). Within this framework, people who are typically absent from mainstream academia emerge as agents of change.

Critical race theory began as an effort to illuminate racial discrimination in the legal system, which stems from broader societal discriminatory practices. CRT recognizes that institutional racism and oppression is inherent throughout society; therefore, it challenges notions that our institutions provide justice for all. Latino/a Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) explores the unique characteristics of the Latino/a community such as language and immigration issues.

Much of the research on Latino/as in education focuses on cultural deficits that prevent Latino/as from achieving academic success. This idea centers on the notion of "fixing" Latino/a students to make them succeed rather than focusing on how institutions are failing Latino/a students. Anzaldúa (1987) discusses the complexities of Latinas' identities through the management of disparate social identities in different cultural

settings. These complexities of ethnic and gender identities are crucial when researching how Latinas are socialized at home, school, and within society and how they manage to successfully navigate these different social settings, particularly in schools. Elenes' (2006) work looked at border/transformative pedagogies that revealed resistant voices to traditional societal hierarchies of gender, race, and class. Latinas who are the first in their families to graduate from college had to resist traditional stereotypes about them to succeed in education. These alternative views provide credence to underrepresented people. Due to the complicated nature of gender, race, and class issues embedded in Latinas' experiences in education, it is imperative to hear dialogue that represents the multiplicities of Latina identities and experiences.

Marginalized people of color, Latinas included, may feel disenfranchised in higher educational settings due to cultural and/or class issues. Critical race theory is important in understanding how these feelings of alienation manifest and how they are connected to larger societal discriminatory practices and structures. Critical race theory challenges white privilege and racism through research by offering valid experiences of underrepresented people through a context of new understandings of racial oppression (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Bernal (2002) discusses how "Latina/Latino critical theory gives credence to critical race-gendered epistemologies that recognize students of color as holders and creators of knowledge" (p. 107). Furthermore, Fernandez (2002) elucidates how Latino/a critical race theory creates a space for pedagogies where students of color emerge as people who control their own ideas and stories that lead to emancipation and empowerment. Combining Latinas' experiences from a personal and academic conceptual lens develops new meanings to confront

expected traditional paradigms. The intersections of these new interpretations are necessary to give a legitimate voice and to combat the misrepresentation of Latinas in education.

One-way to analyze how and why Latinas overcome institutional obstacles is through Critical Race Feminism (CRF). Wing (2003) describes CRF as an emancipatory process that started in legal academia to combat discrimination against women of color in the legal system. CRF is important in that it fills in the pedagogical gap that CRT or LatCrit may leave open. Just as mainstream feminism has given voice to the needs of white middle class females, CRF offers women of color a discourse that reflects the multiplicities of distinctive experiences women of color have, while also examining the intersection of how gender and race reinterpret these multiple identities. CRT and LatCrit serve as an important tool in looking at marginalized people of color; however, the experiences of men of color can vary greatly from women of color. CRF fills this void; however, it is not without problems. Wing describes how CRF dispels the myth that all women feel or see the world in the same way, that women do not have one essential voice through mainstream feminism. Unfortunately, CRF can have a degree of essentialism in research. Wing suggests:

> To a certain degree, we are nonetheless somewhat essentialist; we may find ourselves talking about Black women or Asian women as if there were an essential voice for these groups. The reality for any group is undoubtedly much more complex, but to avoid merely talking about individuals, it sometimes necessary to be strategically essentialist. (p. 7)

This is a challenge for researchers who examine groups of people and want to represent those people in a holistic way, while at the same time acknowledge the balance of unique individual experiences with the goal of framing and theorizing the group as a whole.

Using CRF as my theoretical rationale in my research will affirm female empowerment through my participants' stories of success, while also acknowledging the gender, race, and class hardships they encountered on the road to success. CRF is also harmonious with using counterstories in narrative research as a way to combat deficit ideologies regarding Latinas in education. These reinterpretations are constructed through the voices of Latinas themselves. Words are powerful and convey the experiences of how Latinas overcame and rose above institutional obstacles. Holling's (2006) study discovered that naming and validating experiences transform people to act as agents of change. Bernal (1998) conveys that personal experience is a vital source of cultural intuition. These ideologies can give deeper meaning to understanding the multifarious backgrounds of Latinas in education.

It is also important to examine the social and institutional problems of schools and how they are failing Latinas, rather than focusing on the deficits or problems of Latinas in schools. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) write of the importance of developing and validating counter spaces to empower Chicanas and to disprove stereotypes of academic failures. The theoretical framework and research methodology used in this study will illuminate the complexities of gender, race, and class, and how Latinas overcame obstacles and what strategies they used to succeed throughout the educational pipeline. Their counterstories will challenge misconceptions and stereotypes and provide alternative views of Latinas in education.

Research Questions

The following four questions will guide this study of counterstories from

Latinas who have successfully navigated the educational pipeline and are the first in their families to complete their undergraduate degree:

1. What factors contribute to Latinas' success in school?
2. What obstacles do Latinas' confront in their K-16 educational experiences?
3. How do gender, race, and class impact their education?
4. How are Latinas' impacted by their accomplishment of being the first in their families to complete an undergraduate degree?

Educational Significance

The intention and approach of this study departs from research studies that focus on the cultural deficits of Latinas who are not succeeding in school. This work will overshadow the crisis talk of the problems facing the Latino/a community and reveal the voices of successful Latinas who have overcome institutional challenges throughout their educational experiences to graduate from college. According to Yosso (2005), "Deficit thinking takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because: (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills; and (b) parents neither value nor support their child's education" (p. 75). Yosso's work contends that many underrepresented communities have community cultural wealth that stems from an "array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts that go unrecognized and unacknowledged" (p. 69). My research can also give new insights into why or how Latinas succeed in college, particularly Latinas who are the first in their families to complete their baccalaureate degrees.

The link between Latinas and cultural social support with academic success has been well documented (Aguilar, 1996; Castillo & Hill, 2004; Ceja, 2004; Gloria, 1997; Gonzalez, Stoner, & Jovel, 2003). Some studies found that mother's encouragement was used as social capital and an important motivator in daughters completing college (Gandara, 1995; Garcia, 2004; Garza, 1998). Examining Latina college success could provide the necessary counterstories to counteract discourses of academic failures. This narrative research may also offer new insights for teachers and researchers to look at the cultural strengths of Latinas that have proven to be beneficial in their college achievements. Investigating the reasons that led to Latina academic success can provide alternative models or programs for schools to develop and emulate for future generations. Additionally, future generations of Latinas can learn from the participants' individual and collective experiences through the educational pipeline as motivation to transcend their own circumstances to achieve college success.

Definition Of Terms

Chicano/a: According to Hayes-Bautista (2004), "Chicano" came out of the Chicano movement of the 1960s and was a way for U.S. born people of Mexican descent to resist against institutional neglect and discrimination by reframing and renaming their cultural identities to represent a perspective of social change. Adding to this, Urrieta (2004) describes the specific gendered term of "Chicana" originating out of a need to combat sexism and to move outside of white feminist movements in order to draw attention to a myriad of social issues related to Mexican women and to gain empowerment though political and social activism.

Community Cultural Wealth: Yosso (2005) acknowledges that communities of color have important contributions and advantages that contribute to success. This cultural wealth can include aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant capital (p. 69). These forms of capital are recognized as cultural assets and are nurtured by their homes and communities.

Counterstories: Counterstories provide a theoretical framework in research that counters traditional narrative research by creating a space for marginalized people to tell their stories. Critical race counterstories are a method of retelling majoritarian stories that typically distort images and identities of racially and socially marginalized people (Bernal, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2006).

Cultural Capital: Bordieu's (1997) theory of cultural capital constructs explanations for differential educational achievements by examining various cultural factors such as class backgrounds, knowledge, and skills to account for failure or success in schools. Parents pass down these types of advantageous or disadvantageous cultural values to their

children, who affect their success in schools and inevitably reproduces the social classes.

Educational Pipeline: Yosso (2006) describes the educational pipeline as a system of interrelated institutions where students move from one level to the next. The journey is varied and shaped by school structures, policies, and culture.

Hispanic Serving Institutes: Nationally recognized colleges where Latino/as constitutes 35% percent of the total student body (Macdonald, Botti, & Clark, 2007).

Latino/a: Hayes-Bautista (2004) explains how this term defies past words that insinuate a minority group or race. The author further emphasizes that Latino/a encapsulates a broader, more comprehensive word that is inclusive of all the different groups of people of Latin American descent, regardless of language or place of origin. Latinas is not a homogenous group in that this term does not adequately account for the multiplicities of nationality, language, socio-economic status of Latinas and the unique experiences of individuals. It is important to study Latinas as a whole group since all Latinas regardless of these differences face racism and sexism in our society.

Social Capital: Coleman (1988) affirms the idea of informal or formal networks that can lead to life opportunities under the complexities of a society that contradicts and undermines those efforts.

Stereotyped Threat: Steele (1997) confirms that underrepresented students who are negatively stereotyped live down to those low expectations, particularly on standardized tests or other test performances. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy where students become disconnected with school due to these negative internal and external beliefs.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The invisibility of Latinas in high school and college has been well documented. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2010a), Latinas have the highest dropout rates in high school at 16.1% and some of the lowest college completion rates at 8.1% in the 2009 academic year (2010b). Education can serve as a gateway to increased life and job opportunities as well as an important foundation for higher education. The importance of a college degree opens many doors to career opportunities and financial independence. It is important to examine institutional barriers within the educational pipeline to discover why this is occurring and how Latinas transcend these obstacles to succeed at the collegiate level. This research would give teachers and researchers a better understanding of Latina students' abilities to succeed in school, and how institutional programs or resources can maximize social capital for Latinas to aid them in successfully completing a baccalaureate degree.

Six categories of research will be reviewed including: (a) the history of females in education (Edwards, 2001; Sadker & Sadker, 1994), (b) the historical context of Latino/as in education (Cuadraz, 1999; Valencia & Black, 2002), (c) theories of gender role stereotyping and how Latinas face additional educational pressures due to sex role and racial stereotyping (American Association of University Women [AAUW], 1999; Niemann, 2001), (d) research investigating Latina students' journey at the beginning of the educational pipeline during elementary school and middle school (Meador, 2005; Rolón-Dow, 2004), (e) Latinas' retention and dropout rates in high school (Ginorio &

Huston, 2001), (f) Latinas' challenges in college (Gonzalez, Joval, & Stoner, 2004; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002), and (g) Latinas' cultural strengths and programs that help maximize Latinas' college potential (Ceja, 2004; Kimura-Walsh, Yamamura, Griffin, & Allen, 2009).

Gendered Experiences: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives

Introduction

Finding out what is working and what is not working in schools throughout Latinas' educational experiences is key to understanding the complexities of college completion rates for Latinas. Part of that process is analyzing how gender, race, and class issues impact Latinas throughout their educational journeys. Looking at history, it is easy to see how female students of color have faced discrimination in American schools. Much of the historical information on females in education focuses on the early efforts of white females and how they slowly became integrated in co-educational classrooms. An overview of research focusing on Latino/as' schooling experiences in history will be discussed in the next section.

Sadker and Sadker (1994) reveal how all females, regardless of their ethnicity, were banned from attending school in Colonial times and the centuries before. The thinking was that males and females were on separate tracks for life, boys were going to grow up and become providers of the family; whereas, girls were going to become mothers and wives. Men needed to become educated while girls' were relegated to learning domestic skills so they could fulfill domestic destinies in their adult roles. According to the authors, many girls desperately wanted to learn and would sneak into schoolhouses, listening through a crack in a window or door.

This did not change until some women began fighting for equity in schools. According to Edwards (2001), some females were offered the same academic subjects as males in 1823, when Catharine Beecher opened up the first school for girls that focused on academics rather than domesticity. Unfortunately, these schools were few and far between. Sadker and Sadker (1994) found that during the early 1800s, Bible study was generally the accepted mode of education for girls since it was aligned with the idea that females were supposed to be the moral center of the family when they became wives and mothers.

Coeducation: The Key To Equality?

According to Edwards (2001), many women in the early 1800s were seen as second-class citizens due to their roles as wives and mothers and their lack of education. Societal thinking was that women did not need to be educated since their domestic roles did not necessitate academic subjects such as Latin, math, or history. The author contends that societal ideas started to change when Catharine Beecher who started the first academic school for girls also influenced adult women to think of their domestic skills as a serious profession in an effort to bridge the gap between academics and domesticity. Beecher wanted women to take pride in their domestic roles and wrote several books emphasizing the intellectual development of these roles. Over time, more and more schools offered classes to females. Sadker and Sadker (1994) reveal that this did not immediately transfer to equity in the schooling experiences of girls and boys. Many schools continued to be segregated by sex where girls even had separate entrances and small schools would put boys and girls in different parts of the schoolhouses to separate the sexes. Even though females were allowed to attend school, they were still seen as

inferior to males, and each gender was seen as having different life goals. The change to coeducation largely stemmed from economics, since it was cheaper to build only one school or one classroom, then to have separate facilities.

According to Sadker and Sadker (1994), a lot of families did not embrace this idea of coeducation. Coeducation was revolutionary, but unfortunately it did not coincide with societal sex role expectations, which lagged behind in terms of equitable opportunities for everyone. The researchers discuss how many upper class white families placed their daughters in seminaries, where girls received lessons in moral, manners, and the mind, setting them up for their roles as proper wives and mothers. Some seminaries taught Latin, history, and math, as well as teacher preparation programs. The seminaries were positive in that they prepared women for post secondary education. In 1833, Oberlin College accepted women in their coeducational institutions. Although, more women began attending college, females did face gender discrimination in college. Female college students were expected to take care of the domestic duties, cleaning and laundering the clothes of the male students. Females also received different titles and names for their baccalaureate degrees to distinguish them from male undergraduate degrees. Females received the "Mistress of Music or "Mistress of Instruction" degrees (Sadker & Sadker, p. 21). It was not until 1870, that more women were allowed to attend colleges. It was not due to a revolutionary change in societal thinking as much as the political, and economic realities of the times. The Civil War caused a deep shortage of males, so colleges started to accept women for their own financial gain.

As more and more women began attending college, they continued to experience gender discrimination and a backlash. Sadker and Sadker (1994) reveal how male

students and male professors would routinely harass female students. O'Kelly and Carney (1986) purport these discriminatory practices also coincided with the medical community assertions that women were physically frail and should not engage in mental activities because it would impair their future abilities to have children. Furthermore, the researchers point out that some of the first female colleges, such as Vassar, in 1865, disproved these notions of female frailty since the students attending Vassar participated in academically rigorous work as well as arduous physical education programs and these women thrived under these conditions. Society and the medical community were forced to take notice and change their ideas of women in education.

This change in societal views was helpful in advancing white females in academics; however, it was not completely transformative. According to Sadker and Sadker (1994), female students gained access to more education in the 1900s, but they still experienced gender role stereotyping within schools. Up until the 1970s and 1980s, many girls were placed in vocational education programs to prepare them to be housewives and secretaries, as they were routinely placed in home economics and typing/shorthand classes. In 1972, Title IX was enacted to combat these issues, making gender discrimination in schools illegal. Unfortunately, Tile IX has not remedied sex role stereotyping that continues today, which will be more fully discussed later in this chapter.

The Miseducation Of Latino/as Throughout History

Introduction

Similar to other marginalized groups before them, Latino/as have been subjected to racial categories and definitions that varied throughout history. The complexities of

identity were deeply entrenched in governmental policies and racist ideologies. Hayes-Bautista (2004) looks at the fluctuating ideas on categorizing Latino/as in history. Latino/as were considered nonwhite and then they were considered "Indian." Once they were deemed "Indian" then Latino/as were subjected to all the federal laws governing Indians, so they lost their rights to own land, natural citizenship, and equitable schooling.

Hayes-Bautista (2004) confirms that in 1940, the Census Bureau recategorized Latino/as as "white" (p. 29). Unfortunately, this only served to further marginalize and make Latino/as invisible. Hayes-Bautista also found that many people felt alienated and disenfranchised from this new label. The message that Latino/as are "white" yet deemed "different" due to their cultural differences, language, and/or brown skin is wrought with contradictions since Latinos did not enjoy the same equity in society, including education, even though they were categorized as "white." This continues today with the U.S. Census Bureau forms where Latino/as can designate their ethnic identity as Latino/a, but racially, they must choose between black and white.

Separate Schooling

The miseducation of Latino/as has a long history rooted in oppression and discrimination stemming from pervasive segregation in schooling. Many scholars cite the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 as a catalyst for societal marginalization of Latino/as (Duncan-Andrade, 2005; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998; Valencia, 2002). San Miguel and Valencia (2002) explain that the treaty and the United States forced seizure of Mexican land was a major turning point in history and "Mexicans living in the United States became a conquered people"(p. 354). These events paved the way towards a hierarchal societal structure, where discrimination of Latino/as became widely prevalent.

Segregation of Latino/as in schools became the norm, despite an absence of policies or laws that sanctioned these practices (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998; Valencia, 2002).

When Latino/as attended these segregated schools, the conditions of the schools were deplorable. Valencia, Menchaca, and Donato (2002) report that post-1848, White society was more interested in using money and resources to update schools for White children, rather than the schools for Mexican children. This led to a disparity in the physical environment of White schools versus Mexican schools that perpetuated the inequities Mexicans experienced in the larger society. Valencia (2008) compares photographs of White schools and Mexican schools that reveal Mexican students housed in old army barracks with no lunchroom or cafeteria, restrooms located outside with no stalls, lights, windows, ventilation, floors or outdoor drinking fountains. In contrast, the White schools had modern, clean buildings with cafeterias, indoor restrooms with stalls and windows, electrically cooled fountains, and good classroom lighting.

In addition to the dilapidated physical features of these schools, Mexican children also suffered from cultural exclusion in the curriculum. The practice of Americanization and the exclusive focus on Anglo history was prevalent in early curriculum (Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Valencia, 2002). Additionally, schools banned the use of Spanish in the classroom (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998; Valencia, 2002). Duncan-Andrade assert that this denial of Mexican culture inevitably led Mexican children to believe that they were not valued and that school was not a welcoming place for them.

Despite the oppressive nature of educational institutions, there were notable early court cases that prompted the way for change. Valencia (2008) discusses the importance of certain court cases such as *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove School District* (1931), the nations

first desegregation court case. The school board of the Lemon Grove School District voted to build a separate school for Mexican children. The board deemed this necessary due to supposed overcrowding in the school where both Anglo and Mexican children attended, without consulting or notifying Mexican parents or children. The board cited it as an overcrowding issue, but according to Valencia, the decision was based more on racism and prejudice. The Mexican parents mobilized and instructed their children not to attend this new school since they recognized that their new school would lack the resources of their old integrated school. The court ruled in favor of the Mexican community and found that the Lemon Grove school board could not segregate Mexican American children.

Additionally, the case of *Mendez v. Westminister* (1946) was possibly more significant as it had educational implications for the entire nation. Valencia (2008) reports that this case stemmed from Mexican American children who were denied access to a white school due to their ethnicity. The judges ruling was particularly important in that it provided a new interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment that guaranteed Mexican American equal rights (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998).

Despite these gains, segregation continued to occur due to the ambiguous racial identities of Mexican Americans seen as the 'other White' people. According to Valencia, Menchata, and Donato (2002), *Brown v. The Board of Education* (1954) did not protect Mexican American children from segregation, because they were not a separate racial group. Furthermore, it was not until *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi Independent School District* (1970) when a judge ruled Mexican Americans were a

separate ethnic group and should be protected by the *Brown* case in an effort to afford Mexican American children educational rights. Unfortunately, segregation continued after the *Cisneros* case and endures today. According to Gándara and Contreras (2009), Mexican children were routinely segregated in schools due to perceived language barriers and because they lived in segregated neighborhoods.

Institutional Practices

As important as these cases were, schools found ways around new laws by continuing to miseducate Latino/as through various institutional practices such as curriculum differentiation. According to Valencia (2002), "the historical justification for curriculum differentiation was grounded in the belief that too many differences in ability level among students in the same classroom created ineffectual climates for teaching and learning" (p. 27). This was a catalyst into the explosion of intelligence and achievement tests. Historically, Mexican Americans have scored low on these types of tests due to inadequate language acquisition classes and schooling as well as cultural biases within the tests themselves (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998; Valencia, 2002). It was a common practice in schools during this time period to track Latino students based on academic ability, a reality that continues today. Valencia, Menchaca, and Donato (2002) refer to this type of ability grouping as tracking, where Latino/as are placed in vocational classes or non-college track classes with the expectation that they are not going to college. This has led to the overrepresentation of Latino/as in non-college preparatory classes; subsequently, Latino/as are also historically underrepresented in college preparatory classes.

Females, in particular, were subjected to this type of discrimination and underrepresentation. Valencia, Villarreal, and Salinas (2002) discuss how Mexican American females were pushed into stereotypical female classes like home economics, which did not adequately prepare them for college or the job market. Inevitably, this reflects the racial and gender stereotyping of society during the early 1900s. Mexican American females faced a double bind in gaining access to quality education.

This double discrimination has followed Latinas throughout history in work and education. Nieto Gomez (1997) discusses how historically, Chicanas have had higher rates of unemployment and lower rates of pay despite their education due to racist gender stereotypes of Chicanas as passive and submissive. According to Garcia (1997), "one third of the college recruitment of Chicanas were women in 1969 and 1970, because more than half of these women dropped out before their junior year in college" (p. 114). Garcia points out that this was not due to Chicanas' scholastic problems, she found that Chicanas performed well academically; however, they were not given academic support and encouragement from counselors, teachers, and peers. Furthermore, these stereotypes impeded Latinas getting ahead in school as teachers and counselors assumed that they were not going to college.

Language Policies

Compounding these educational stereotypes, Latino/as also had to contend with issues regarding language policies in education. The use of Spanish in schools has always been subject to scrutiny. San Miguel and Valencia (1998) discuss how schools in the mid-1850s routinely restricted Spanish usage in classrooms. According to Valencia (2008), many schools enacted policies that completely eliminated the use of Spanish in

classrooms. In schools, if children were caught talking Spanish in their English only schools, they were fined or punished with detention. Schools were essentially sending a message to Mexican children that society did not value their language or culture; therefore, they do not value or care for Mexican children. Bilingual education continues to be a highly contested and controversial issue.

Federal policies and court cases were tools to combat discrimination and develop guidelines to ensure bilingual education has a place in education. The Bilingual Education Act (1968) laid the groundwork for providing equity for English-language learners, rather than determining actual language policy (Garcia & Wiese, 2002; Valencia, 2008). According to Garcia and Wiese (2002), it was not until the reauthorization of the Bilingual Education Act (1974) when language and bilingual education were explicitly addressed. The first court case that addressed language minority students was *Lau v. Nichols*. Garcia and Wiese (2002) describe this case as opening the door for future lawsuits by Latino/a plaintiffs in regards to bilingual education.

Additionally, Latino/as were further stigmatized and misrepresented by being placed in special education classes. Overrepresentation of Latino/as in special education can be correlated to the lack of comprehensive language assessment, English only tests, and inadequate education (Rueda, Artiles, Salazar, & Higareda, 2002; Valencia, 2008). Most Latino/as were placed in special education after scoring low on intelligence tests. Looking at the lack of quality accessible education for Latino/as during this time period, it should not be surprising that they scored lower under this inequitable educational system. Additionally, intelligence tests were only given in English, which makes it more

difficult for Spanish speaking children to do well on these tests (Rueda, Artiles, Salazar, & Higareda, 2002; Valencia, 2008). It was not until *Diana v. State Board of Education* (1970), when important modifications regarding special education were made. Valencia (2008) describes these changes as a more comprehensive and holistic process for special education placements, including language assessment, parental consultation, multiple information collection, retesting and reevaluation to help circumvent the overrepresentation of Latino/as and other ethnic groups in special education and tests given in Spanish.

Unfortunately, other rulings and propositions that were passed in the 1990s continue to subjugate Latino/as in education. In 1994, California passed Proposition 187 that barred immigrants who were not here legally from accessing public social services, including all levels of public education (Novas, 2007). Additionally, Californians approved Proposition 209 in 1996, which prohibited public institutions, including colleges, from considering race or gender in admissions. According to Valencia (2004), this ended "affirmative action in public higher education throughout California" (p. 30). The passing of Proposition 227 in 1998 essentially eliminated bilingual education in California and is further evidence of discrimination and anti-Latino/a sentiment. Additionally, Garcia and Wiese (2004) indicate that in 2000, Arizona also implemented an English-only policy in schools. Many people were quick to assume that being fluent in another language, particularly Spanish, would only interfere with education. Ultimately, these propositions alienate Latino/as, particularly Latino/a immigrants, and make it nearly impossible to obtain an equitable education.

Language And Culture

Language policies are often entrenched in ideas that assume that recently arrived immigrants should assimilate and speak the English language without much difficulty. Valdés (2001) found that in schools, English-only policies dictate that students should be given one year to learn the English language with often little to no regard for the child's home language. Additionally, language policies are often geared towards a quick fix and easy answer to the "language problem" in our schools. Valdés discusses how the English-language learners in her study were frequently isolated from their English-speaking classmates, which made it harder to acquire new English-language skills and their lesson plans were over simplified; consequently, this ended up hurting them in the long run, by pushing them further behind academically as well as providing them with only minimal English-speaking skills. Also, Valdés found that many classrooms emphasize survival English, so students are learning enough to get by, which inevitably sets them up for future lower wage jobs. This system sets students up for failure in schools, rather than reinforcing their language and culture.

Oftentimes the curriculum surrounding English-learners neglects their academic needs and negates their cultural identity at the expense of learning English. Valenzuela (1999) discusses the idea of subtractive schooling in how institutions, administration, teachers, and the curriculum strip away Mexican Americans' cultural identities. As mentioned previously, American education has a history of devaluing the Spanish language. Valenzuela shows how language loss can occur in her study of Mexican American high school students in Texas, who felt that their Mexican identities were questioned and teased by their peers because they were not fluent in Spanish.

Additionally, students encountered hurtful situations when not being able to communicate with relatives who spoke monolingual Spanish. Schools should encourage bilingualism in classrooms to honor culture and to prevent language loss.

Bilingualism is an asset, whether you are looking at cultural identities, education, or careers. Oftentimes Latino/as' bilingualism is seen as something that needs fixing in the school setting; whereas, being bilingual in the workplace is seen more of an asset. Flores (2005) considers the historical implications of this deficit view of bilingual children, recalling how teachers reinforced rote drills to eliminate accents and fluency in Spanish. Spanish speaking children were seen as handicapped and inferior due to their lack of English skills, regardless of when they immigrated here or the lack of equitable schooling. The lack of quality bilingual programs inevitably placed additional obstacles for Latino/as seeking a college education.

Higher Education

Historically, there has been a dismal amount of Latino/as enrolled in higher education. Gándara and Contreras (2009) research looks at the Latino/a education crisis as a historical problem, since 1975, Latino/as have the lowest numbers of completion rates of bachelor's degrees when compared to white and African American students. In 1975, 24% of Whites, 11% of African Americans, and 9% of Latino/as hold bachelor's degrees. Valencia (2002) attributes these low numbers to the lack of quality bilingual education, curriculum differentiation, limited access to secondary education, and high dropout rates. Legislation and community activism sparked change in the 1960s to combat these issues.

According to Macdonald, Botti, and Clark (2007), President Lyndon Johnson enacted the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide a vehicle for increased representation and defense of underrepresented students. The authors go on to state, "Previously dehistoricized, Latino/as' inclusion in the census and federal government agencies as an official category meant that accountability for higher education enrollment, retention, and degree attainment could finally be formally documented" (p. 486). Under this Act, educational institutions would now be held accountable for the inclusion of Latino/as in higher education. The authors report that Latino/as increased their visibility in protest groups and politics during the 1960s, which transcended to improvements in higher education for Latino/as. The social movements on college campuses across the world in the 1960s and the Civil Rights Movement increased community activism in marginalized groups, including Latino/as. The Chicano Movement also gained momentum during this time.

One positive outcome of the Chicano Movement was the demand for an increase in Chicano Studies classes at universities to celebrate and explore the culture of Latino/as. According to Macdonald, Botti, & Clark (2007), Latino/a activism commanded an increase in minority students in colleges, diversity in faculty, and inclusive cultural curriculum. Inevitably, this led to more Latino/a leaders who wanted to ensure the success for future Latino/a college students. The authors also call attention to the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, which originated in 1986 providing scholarships and internship opportunities for Latino/a students. In 1992, the idea of Hispanic Serving Institutes (HSI) came out of this coalition, where colleges that maintained 25% or more full-time Hispanic undergraduates were able to have this

distinction. Areas with higher populations of Latino/as, such as California and Texas, tend to have more HSI's in their respective states.

Much of the previous historical information centers on Latino/as' experiences without mentioning the unique contributions of Latinas. The absence of this historical information may appear to show that Latinas did not participate in making history; however, this is not the case. Garcia (1997) shows that Chicanas were instrumental in voicing their opinions throughout history about controversial issues such as abortion, birth control, childcare, employment, and welfare. They communicated their ideas through a variety of media, newspapers, newsletters, and magazines. In the early 1970s, a newspaper, Hijas de Cuauhtemoc focused on educating Chicanas on history and politics. Garcia also highlights Encuentro Femenil, the first Chicana feminist journal that was published in 1973. The feminist journal was a perfect union between the recognition of being separate from the mainstream, white women's movement. It also marked the importance of cultural pride and values as well as feminist ideals in their lives.

These published works are extremely important, as there is limited published research on the unique gendered experiences Latinas encountered in history and education pre-1970s. One study by Cuadraz (2005) culminated in a comprehensive overview of Chicanas in higher education from the 1970s to the present and found that Chicanas faced added pressures in college due to their domestic roles and societal gender stereotyping that reinforced deficit thinking that Chicanas are passive and not suited for higher education.

Conclusion

Historically, females have been denied an education due to societal thinking that women did not need to be educated in their domestic roles as wives and mothers. Through time and the increase of coeducational institutions, white females were slowly given a chance to participate in academics. It was not until the 1930s and 1940s when court cases were enacted to ensure equity in schools for Latino/as. Since those laws passed, Latino/as have been subjected to inadequate schooling, cultural exclusion within curriculum, substandard or no bilingual programs, and overrepresentation in vocational and non-college preparatory classes. These inequities inevitably trickled up through the educational pipeline in higher education, where Latino/as faced similar obstacles. Latinas were hit particularly hard since they experience double discrimination in schooling due to their gender and race as well as the stereotypes of Latinas as submissive and not college bound. History has set up a context of marginalization and discrimination for Latinas in education that continues today.

Gender, Race, And Class Stereotyping In Education

Introduction

The historical context of educational practices combined with the complexities and cumulative experiences of Latinas is key in understanding the intersection of gender, race, and class issues when exploring Latinas' educational experiences. Wing's (2003) theoretical framework of Critical Race Feminism (CRF) offers women of color a discourse that reflects the multiplicities of their distinctive experiences. This theoretical support is necessary since looking at gender inequities alone would not give a complete

picture of why Latinas successfully complete college or why they drop out. Lopez (2002b) describes these multiple experiences:

> Race-gender experiences are the episodes in which men and women undergo racial(izing) and gender(ing) processes in a variety of social spaces, including but not limited to public spaces, schools, work and family life. Over time, these repeated experiences have a cumulative effect on youth outlooks toward education. Race-gender outlooks are the life perspectives articulated by second-generation youth about education and social mobility. (p. 69)

In education, similar to the world outside of school, teachers, peers, administration, policy makers, curriculum, and textbooks sometimes recreate these gender or race stereotypes. A comprehensive picture of how gender, race, and class societal stereotypes are recreated and maintained in the school system is important in understanding Latinas' educational barriers and academic successes throughout the educational pipeline. In the sections that follow, I will illuminate research on gender, race, and class issues in separate sections, but sometimes the research will inevitably inform one area with another, creating an interdisciplinary approach.

Gender Inequity In Schools

As discussed earlier there is a long legacy of gender inequities. Since the women's movement of the 1970s and women's gains in the workplace in the 1980s and 1990s, there has been a heightened awareness regarding gender equity in society, as well as in schools. Gándara and Contreras (2009) discuss the increased focus in the 1990s on raising the achievement gap for girls in our educational institutions. They also look at how critics believe that this attention on girls' education is taking time and resources away from boys. Gándara and Contreras claim that this gender divide does not negatively impact boys, as the proportion of males attending college has not decreased,

they suggest that girls and young women are simply moving ahead. Although, the achievement gap between the sexes has diminished, gender stereotypes and school culture continue to be unfavorably biased towards females.

Inequities in females' educational experiences through sex role stereotyping and less attention from teachers is documented in research (AAUW, 1999; Duffy, Warren, & Walsh, 2001; Orenstein, 1994; Owens, Smothers, & Love, 2003; Sadker, 2000; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). This discrimination is then compounded by the invisibility of females in curriculum. Crocco and Libresco (2007) explored the history of inequities of female representation in curriculum and discovered a lack of females and their contributions documented in history and social studies curriculum as well as textbooks. Sadker and Zittleman (2007) have found seven types of gender or ethnicity/race bias in textbooks that include invisibility, stereotyping, imbalance/selectivity, unreality, fragmentation/isolation, linguistic bias, and cosmetic bias (p. 272-273). All of these discriminatory practices have profound effects on learners in that they receive a distorted picture of what females and females of color have contributed to society and history.

There has been extensive research proving gender bias and the stereotyping of females continues to exist in our schools (AAUW, 1999; Orenstein, 1994; Owens, Smothers, & Love, 2003; Sadker, 2000; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Research shows that males receive more positive experiences with teachers through increased interactions and feedback from teachers (AAUW, 1999; Duffy, Warren, & Walsh, 2001; Sadker, 2000). Furthermore, boys are called on more often, asked more probing questions to incite additional critical thinking; whereas, girls are called on less often and given less feedback. In a study by Duffy, Warren, and Walsh (2001), 597 high school students and

36 math and English teachers were observed for their classroom interaction patterns with students. The study found that teachers interacted much more with male students than with their female students. Teachers inevitably give subtle messages that boys are capable of rising up to the challenge of more thought provoking questions and interactions, while girls are silenced. Brown and Gilligan (1992) as well as Pipher (1994) discuss the link between societal silencing of females, which leads to lower self-esteem. It is easy to postulate that students with low self-worth are less apt to interact in the classroom or volunteer during classroom discussions. Furthermore, Brown and Gilligan found that adolescent girls not only lose their confidence, but they lose their voices, and become passive observers in the classroom and in life.

This silencing of girls is exacerbated by male domination in most school curriculum. According to the AAUW (1999), significant gender gaps continue to pervade our textbooks and children's storybooks. Male characters are seen as the leaders who are strong and brave; whereas, female characters are viewed as passive bystanders. Additionally, increased attention is given to males who have contributed to our country in history lessons. Females' accomplishments are virtually invisible or seen as less important.

Due to this invisibility, young women may disconnect with the curriculum and assume that education does not apply to them. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule's (1997) research shows that when students, specifically female students, see themselves reflected in the curriculum, they tend to be more engaged in learning. Furthermore, when students connect their own gendered experiences to the curriculum, this "connected knowing," becomes transformational in the learning process because the

classroom validates feminine experiences as opposed to traditional male dominated curriculum. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule postulate that connected knowing in the classroom is key in validating female experiences under the context of traditional male pedagogy.

The invisibility of females in curriculum perpetuates a negative self-image in academia and causes problems in standardized testing. Steele (1997) found that stereotyped threat affects women and African Americans at the most opportune time, during standardized testing. The importance of scoring high on these tests is important in obtaining scholarships or acceptance into competitive colleges. Steele determined that students, who viewed themselves as educationally inferior due to negative societal stereotypes, lived down to those expectations and received lower scores. Furthermore, these stereotypes also threaten women's' math performance under testing conditions (Schmader, 2002; Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999). These negative academic effects are exacerbated when students are influenced by rigid gender role expectations in their homes as well.

Latinas also need to be affirmed in their educational goals within their homes. Valenzuela (1999) found that many Mexican females had a lot of responsibilities at home, taking care of siblings, cooking dinner, and cleaning the house. Additionally, Valenzuela discovered that many females spent long hours working on their boyfriends' or male friends' homework, which kept them away from their own educational responsibilities. Gender role expectations for Latinas to be nurturing and dutiful in the home can prevent them from aggressively seeking success in school. In contrast to this, Bettie's (2003) research on working class Mexican-American and white girls, found that

gender actually was an advantage in working class families, where females succeeded in school, in direct opposition to their delinquent brothers. They did not want to follow their brothers' path since there were so many negative consequences and parental anguish attributed to their bad behaviors. Bettie's work is a prime example of how the intersection of gender, race, and class unfolds. Theories of race-gender experiences from Lopez (2002a) is important to consider here as we see females who actively counter gender-race role expectations to have a more positive outlook on education; whereas, males are following their prescribed gender-race experiences since it is socially expected. It is imperative to look at the multiplicity and intersection of Latinas' experiences in their homes and how it relates to societal gender role expectations and impacts their achievement in education.

Racial Stereotyping In Education

Gender and race role expectations for Latinas are exacerbated by a history of oppression, which was presented in earlier sections as well as current discriminatory practices. Today, there is an anti-immigrant and/or anti-Latino/a climate in our country, which stems from increased immigration concerns, an economic downturn and a loss of jobs in America. Racial stereotyping of Latino/as in the media and/or society still exists (Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Lopez, 2002c; Suárez-Orozco, 2004). Societal gender stereotypes about Latino/as also subsist. Niemann (2001) exposes the truth about the stereotypes of Chicanas as passive and family-oriented, rather than college educated. She finds teachers and school counselors hold these stereotypes of Chicanas' gender roles; whereas, white women are not subjected to these ideals. There is more flexibility for women from mainstream society to balance careers and families.

Rigid gender role and/or cultural expectations for Latinas stem from societal beliefs and then can become internalized. According to Lopez (2002a), "Like race, gender has no biological basis" (p. 17). Therefore, gender and race ideologies as socially constructed roles are defined and reinforced by society. Children and teenagers develop their identities through gender role socialization by peers, parents, media, and educational institutions. Compounding this journey is racial identity married with societal gender role expectations. Suárez-Orozco (2004) confirms that the path for second generation children can be more difficult due to how the host country views their particular ethnic group, the choice of ethnic activities that person engages in, or if they adopt too many of the host countries' identities of speaking English well or doing good in school, they can be accused of "acting white" (p. 189). The complexities and fluidity of identity formation for Latinas is multifaceted depending on societal and familial gender role socialization and how these ideas are internalized.

These societal stereotypes can also transcend to academic stereotypes. Flores-Gonzalez (2002) discovered links between societal stereotypes and educational expectations from teachers and schools as well as peer pressure that influenced student identities. From these expectations, Gonzalez found that many Latino/a high school students fit into a category of "stayer, leaver, or returner" (p. 23). These school and self-imposed stereotypes were used as a way to explain the differences in why students drop out of high school, return to school, or stay. Students with these identities both lived up to those expectations to succeed in school or fell to those negative labels and dropped out of school. Katz (1999) found teachers' stereotypes about urban Latino/a students to be the primary reason why they became disengaged from school. A Latina middle school

student spoke of one teacher's scolding of a group of Latinas who were not paying attention in class, telling them they would end up being prostitutes due to their deviant behavior in school. Demeaning comments from teachers, a lack of inclusive curriculum, and societal stereotypes unavoidably take its toll on Latina students, which then fuels additional stereotypes that Latinas are not motivated or they do not care about education.

Valencia and Black (2002) completed a comprehensive review on the stereotype that Mexican Americans do not value education. They report that academic deficit literature focuses on how Latino/a culture leads to school failure rather than how the schools fail Latino/a children. This is echoed by Valenzuela's (1999) work with Mexican youth at an inner-city high school in Houston. Teachers and classroom policies that undermine Latino/as' success in schools reinforce deficit thinking. Unfortunately, this myth continues to prevail in education and further silences Latino/as in the classroom. In Quiroz's (2001) study of 27 Puerto Rican and Mexican students, she found that Latino/a students felt that teachers ignored them; therefore, it illustrated what Fine (1991) exposes as systemic school silencing of marginalized students.

A lack of inclusive curriculum and silencing in the classroom affects Latinas significantly. They face an additional disconnect from school and curriculum that centers on traditional White male pedagogy. Losey (1997) discovered pervasive silencing in Mexican American students, particularly female students' lack of classroom participation. However, there is evidence that Latinas are resisting these passive stereotypes. Denner and Dunbar (2004) challenge these assumptions in their study of Mexican American girls and established that girls had no problem speaking up for themselves or advocating for others. There continues to be a need for more research in

this area. Despite resisting institutional oppression, Latina students continue to experience discrimination in education.

Classroom and teaching practices in many instances replicate race relations and stereotyping within the larger society. This can lead to a wall of silence and can block the relationship and communication between teacher and student. Teachers are the all-knowing leaders; whereas, students are expected to know little. Research by Valenzuela (1999) found that schools often have a subtractive nature that marginalizes Latino/a students through institutional neglect. When students feel neglected by teachers and the educational system, they do not feel valued or cared for and this becomes a direct cause of their academic failure.

On the other hand, classroom environments that are respectful of students' prior knowledge and abilities reflect a caring and mutually supportive relationship between teacher and student. Freire (1970) proposes that spaces of learning based on critical thinking and authentic dialogues are created when teachers and students practice co-intentional education. Noddings (1992) describes dialogue as a way to connect to one another and to create caring relations amongst teachers and students

The voices and experiences of students can contribute to classroom pedagogy and provide a means for teachers to learn from their students. The belief in students' knowledge can lead to self-efficacy and enlightenment for students. Freire (1974) suggests that true dialogue is a result of students' increased communication, which leads students to emerge as a subject rather than an object of their learning. This new reality is recreated by students' beliefs that they have valid contributions and a place to reveal their ideas. Collins (2000) postulates that "humanizing education is preeminently dialogical, a

constant co-investigation carried out by students who recognize that knowing is a process of never-ending perception, and by educators who recognize that they are themselves students" (p. 182). It is the reality that teachers can also learn from their students. True dialogue, respect, and caring are imperative for all students, particularly students of color who already feel marginalized by society.

Teachers come into the classroom with their own background, experiences, and biases that inevitably seep into how they interact with students. Aguilar (1996) confirmed that nearly half of Mexican American college females experienced sexism and racism. Furthermore, Rodriguez, Guido-Dibrito, and Torres (2000) found Latinas experience gender discrimination or sex role stereotypes from white male college professors. Latinas may face double discrimination in academia due to their gender and race. Gonzales, Blanton, and Williams (2002) illuminate the effects of stereotype threat among Latinas in their research. They describe double-minority status as a "psychological state created when two devalued identities interact to influence the individuals in a way that is greater than the sum of the independent effects of those identities" (p. 659). Their work shows stereotype threat is also evident in Latinas' standardized test performance due to social stigmas and socialization, more so, than white women.

Socioeconomic Status in Schools: Class Matters

Stereotyping and discrimination of Latina females is compounded by socioeconomic status. Teachers in our schools are generally white and middle-class. Teachers harbor their own biases and stereotypes, which transcends to treating students different. Research has found that teachers have negative stereotypes about low-income

students and demand less academic expectations from them (Frey, 2002; McLoyd, 1998; Mutua, 2001). Freire (1970) talks of the dehumanization of students due to the oppressive stereotypes and practices of the educational system. Class differences in students place children at a greater disadvantage in learning and succeeding in education due to these negative expectations.

Croizet and Claire (1998) proved that class alters academic proficiency and found that stereotype threat interferes with performance on intellectual tests for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Bowles and Gintis (1977) work exposes that schools actually reinforce and socialize students to remain in their respective social classes. Schools are essentially recreating social classes from one generation to the next. Bordieu's (1977) work on habitus is important in this discussion of how attitudes are deeply entrenched and internalized regarding schooling or aspirations. Habitus serves as a regulator where failure for underprivileged children is normalized. MacLeod (1987) purports that schools prepare students for the positions in the same socioeconomic classes as their parents. Lareau and Horvat (1999) define moments of exclusion as students placed in low ability reading groups because students of color are expected to be in these groups. These expectations and stereotypes reflect and reinforce the inequities of a larger society that keep students of lower socioeconomic status at a disadvantage in schools.

There has been much research documenting the intergenerational connection between economic status and education. Early work by Bordieu (1977) and Coleman (1988) reflect ideologies of social capital, a network of resources, which are embedded in middle to upper class families and communities. In more recent work, researchers have found that economically privileged students have a network of resources that help them

get ahead academically (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Lareau & Horvat (1999) revealed that white parents had increased contact and more comfortable relationships with teachers and administrators. Horvat, Weininger, and Lareau (2003) found middle class parents were able to form groups and alliances with powerful people in their communities such as doctors and lawyers, to actively and quickly address any problems in schools. Parents from lower socioeconomic neighborhoods had significantly reduced community and financial resources; consequently, they tended to deal with school problems on an individual basis. One cannot underestimate the power of collective activism and powerful players in the community to combat educational and/or administrational concerns. These shortcomings continue to plague lower income students and perpetuate educational advantages for middle and upper class students.

Socioeconomic status impacts success or failure in education and research supporting this remains evident in Bordieu's (1977) work. His important contribution of the concept of cultural capital takes reproduction theory to another level, by acknowledging the inherent information and skills that are passed from one generation to the next. Reproduction theories tend to support ideas that social class determines everything. Other research supports that it is not all doom and gloom for underrepresented students. Yosso (2005) contends that, "while Bourdieu's work sought to provide a structural critique of social and cultural reproduction, his theory of cultural capital has been used to assert that some communities are culturally wealthy while others are culturally poor" (p. 76). Other significant studies show that Latino/a parents boost cultural capital and give their children the determination and motivation to succeed

(Gándara, 1995; Garcia, 2004; Moll, Gonzalez, & Amanti, 2005; Trueba, 1999; Valdes, 1996). Mothers' use of consejos or stories provided a moral education to instill cultural pride and resiliency for Latin@ children in school (Ceja, 2004; Gándara, 1995; Garcia, 2004; Valdés, 1996; Villenas, 2001; Villenas & Moreno, 2001). These studies prove that parents and culture can promote children's empowerment in school, despite their lower socioeconomic status.

Parents emerge as change agents to promote educational success for working class students; whereas, Stanton-Salazar's (1997) research reflects middle class or upper class peers as change agents who guide and give educational information to working class peers. This is vital when looking at first-generation college students without first hand knowledge and resources to navigate the college going process. Stanton-Salazar proposes:

> Given that working-class minority children and youth are structurally more dependent on nonfamilial institutional agents for various forms of institutional support, the problematic of interweaving extended trust and solidarity become ever so salient, especially because in the absence of such solidarity, institutional support rarely occurs. (p.17)

This suggests that lower socioeconomic students are at a disadvantage; however, some peers may act as institutional agents with information and resources to help their working-class peers to overcome educational barriers.

Although, there are socioeconomic disadvantages, marginalized students can still overcome these obstacles to succeed in education through parental and peer support. Yosso (2005) asserts that Latino/as have an abundance of community cultural wealth which gives them the hope and determination to resist oppressive conditions to rise above and succeed. Additionally, Trueba's (1999) work illuminates Latino/a children who have

navigated their way through the politics and racism of the educational system to rise above their circumstances through resilience. The empowerment of this knowledge of societal and institutional racism coupled with the ability to acknowledge and overcome it can prove to be extremely powerful and lead to self-actualization.

Conclusion

Although our nation has become more progressive in its attitudes and beliefs about supporting equity in education, our educational system continues to reproduce negative stereotypes and expectations for females and students of color. Extensive research confirms that girls are shortchanged in education. Girls are given less attention and time in the classroom than their male counterparts (AAUW, 1999; Duffy, Warren, & Walsh, 2001; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Additionally, the AAUW points to the invisibility of female centered curriculum and female experiences or history in textbooks leads girls to disconnect from learning. Furthermore, Latinas face additional pressures due to societal stereotyping. Myths of Latinas as passive and family-oriented, rather than academic-oriented, give teachers and counselors stereotypes of Latinas that transcend to teaching and school guidance practices that do not encourage Latinas to go to college.

Latinas may face triple discrimination in education if they come from a lower socioeconomic background. Research has found that teachers hold negative stereotypes about low-income students and expect less of them (Frey, 2002; McLoyd, 1998; Mutua, 2001). Economically privileged students tend to be more academically successful due to their parents' own educational background and a network of resources available to them (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Parents from lower socioeconomic neighborhoods lack financial

resources; however, Latino/a parents gave their children determination and motivation to succeed in other ways. Latino/a parents' relayed stories of immigration and hardship as well as role modeled a strong work ethic to inspire the next generation to succeed (Gandara, 1995; Garcia, 2004; Moll, Gonzalez, & Amanti, 2005; Trueba, 1999; Valdes, 1996).

Gender, race, and class issues in society are reproduced within the school system. There is a wealth of literature and scholarly work on gender, race, and class issues and stereotypes regarding marginalized students that support this in the previous sections. However, there continues to be a gap in educational literature about the intersection of gender, race, and class issues and how these issues support or represent barriers for Latinas throughout the education pipeline, K-16. Lopez (2002b) bridges this gap with her theories on race-gender experiences and race-gender outlooks and how the intersection of gender and race role expectations from family combined with societal gender roles can influence and change perceptions about education.

Latinas' Successes and Barriers Through the Educational Pipeline

Introduction

As presented in the previous sections, there is much research documenting that Latino/as are oppressed in education. Gender, race, and class experiences unfold in various ways depending on the intersection of these competing gender-race expectations. Latinas can experience triple discrimination due to their gender, race, and class, depending on their individual and cumulative experiences. Despite these obstacles, Latinas' success in higher education has been well documented. Much of the research findings support Yosso's (2005) work that concludes that Latino/as have community

cultural wealth that is seen in a variety of forms, whether it is aspirational, familial, cultural, linguistic, social, navigational, or resistant capital. What is lesser known is how Latinas specifically navigate and succeed through the educational pipeline, before college. Much of the research focuses on Latinos in the K-12 educational pipeline, ignoring the unique gendered experiences of Latinas. In the following sections, I will highlight the research findings that focus specifically on Latinas in elementary, middle school, high school, and college.

Elementary and Middle School

In elementary school, there is a gender gap in certain subject areas, but larger gaps remain in testing and learning when looking at socioeconomic backgrounds. According to Corbett, Hill, and St. Rose's (2008) report on national testing, the National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP] on reading, math, and other subjects reveal that girls score higher in reading than boys; whereas, boys outperform girls in math. A larger gap in math and reading proficiency exists for African American and Latino/a youth as well as students of both genders who come from a lower socioeconomic neighborhood. Race and class appears to play a bigger role in determining educational success.

It is vital to explore how Latinas activate social capital in an effort to navigate educational challenges through the educational pipeline. There is a paucity of research regarding young Latinas and schooling. In my literature review, I only included articles that focused specifically on Latinas in education. I found only one research article that exclusively looked at Latinas' education in elementary school; however, I did find six articles that centered on middle school experiences. Mireles-Rios and Romo's (2010) study included a survey and interviews with 69 Mexican American girls in third grade

through sixth grade. The girls went to public schools located in a rural community comprised of newly immigrated Mexicans working in agriculture. Their research concluded that increased communication with mothers about grades and homework correlated with higher grades in math and reading. Additionally, if Mexican American girls perceived their teachers to be friendly and to care about their education, girls tended to receive higher grades in those subjects. These findings are important since they relate to future articles I will be discussing throughout the educational pipeline that confirms that mothers highly influence Latinas' academic success and teachers' caring and support set Latinas' up for success in the classroom.

Although the research articles regarding middle school experiences for Latinas were somewhat limited in scope, looking at newly immigrated girls in the rural southwest (Meador, 2005) or low income, urban Puerto Rican girls (Rolón-Dow, 2004; Rolón-Dow, 2005), and English language anxiety in Mexican girls (Pappamihiel, 2001), there are important lessons gained from their conclusions for future studies in this area.

Meador (2005) and Rolón-Dow (2004) showed how teachers stereotyped their Latina students because they did not really know their students or their culture and then tended to misrepresent them in their comments. One important finding, also discussed earlier in this chapter, is the idea that teacher and schools socialize and stereotype females, particularly if they are non-white and come from a lower socioeconomic background. In Rolón-Dow's (2005) ethnography that focused on the narratives of middle school Puerto Rican girls, the researcher discovered that the girls felt that teachers could not really know or care about them because they differed from them by race and class lines. Since there are few Latina teachers, Latina students often do not have a

shared identity through race or class characteristics with their teachers; therefore, this cultural incongruity can cause them to disconnect from school.

Teachers who attributed labels to Latinas and their potential to succeed academically were evident in research by Meador (2005) and Rolón-Dow (2004). The researchers Rolón-Dow (2005) also shows that the teachers in their more recent study believed that Latino parents did not value education and that these same teachers had negative views of low-income neighborhoods. Additionally, Daisey and Jose-Kampfner's (2002) work also highlights the way young Latina females internalize these societal stereotypes and have lowered educational and career aspirations.

Gender stereotypes were evident in Daisey and Jose-Kampfner's (2002) study, where researchers examined 150 drawings by low-income Mexican and Puerto Rican middle school students to find what illustrations they produced when asked to draw a Latina who worked. Daisey and Jose-Kampfner (2002) reported, "In the drawings, 72% of students depicted women working in factories or doing domestic work, 18% showed women doing clerical work, and 8% portrayed women as teachers" (p. 579). The internalization of societal stereotypes cannot be underestimated. Additionally, curriculum needs to reflect the possibilities of Latina role models in professional fields. Daisey and Jose-Kampfner (2002) incorporated biographical stories of Latinas within curriculum throughout the school year; consequently, towards the end of the year, they found that 70% of the drawings depicted a Latina in a professional career. Inclusive curriculum provides a way for Latina students to connect to the classroom materials, learn about future possible careers, and produces cultural capital in the knowledge that other Latinas have made it.

Unfortunately culturally inclusive curriculum and positive teacher expectations were lacking in research findings by Rolón-Dow (2004) where teachers held stereotypes about their Latina students being overly sexualized and dressed provocatively as deterrents to educational progress. These deficit views were not shared by Latina girls who believed that their interest in their looks and boys had nothing to do with their interest in school. Meador (2005) found that teachers made many assumptions and stereotypes about Mexican American immigrant girls and labeled them as being quiet and non-participatory in the classroom, as well as, being disinterested or unmotivated academically.

Some of this lack of participation in classroom interaction could be attributed to academic anxiety. Pappamihiel (2001) examined 178 middle school students (91 boys and 87 girls), and found Mexican girls were much more anxious about using English in their integrated classes than their male counterparts. Many of these Mexican girls rarely participated in classroom dialogues and avoided speaking aloud in class due to fears of embarrassment from their peers or perceived teacher intimidation.

Research on Mexican girls' self silencing and teachers' stereotyping of them replicates earlier work by Brown and Gilligan (1992) and Pipher (1994) that shows how females are socialized to be quiet and how educational institutions effectively silence female students leading to disengagement in their schooling (AAUW, 1999; Fine, 1991). Additionally, Meador (2005) found teachers who stereotyped bilingual female students as being less academically successful because they were not Americanized yet. Similar to Stanton-Salazar's (1997) work, Meador (2005) found that Mexican girls relied on their social capital to challenge these stereotypes. The middle school Mexican females

rebelled against biased teachers' classifications by embracing their cultural pride and wearing gang-influenced clothing and make-up. Their peer culture elevated their self-confidence and cultural pride to rebel against teachers' racist attitudes. Referencing Yosso's (2005) research on community cultural wealth, her ideas of resistant capital relates to this article and illuminates how the girls in Meador's (2005) study activated their resistance by using oppositional behaviors to combat inequities in their school.

There also has been other significant research that has proven that Latino/a children who activate social capital have positive school outcomes (Moll, Gonzalez, & Amanti, 2005; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Trueba, 1999; Valdes, 1996). Yosso's (2005) work looks at social capital in a multifaceted way by highlighting the multiplicity of factors that could contribute to social capital. Much of the research on social capital is generalized between marginalized groups of people without specifically addressing gender. There has been little discussion regarding the gendered differences of the unique schooling experiences of Latinas. Garcia-Reid (2007) examined factors that contributed towards social capital in low-income, Latina middle school students and found that "teachers offered the greatest contribution to school engagement among Hispanic girls residing in marginalized environments" (p. 174). This important research finding is pivotal in realizing the impact that teachers can have on their Latina students' self-esteem and accomplishments in the classroom.

High School

Females' self-esteem decreases once they reach adolescence, which can have a profound effect on their education and future college and career opportunities. Research has shown that girls' self-confidence decreases significantly once they enter high school

(AAUW, 1999, Orenstein, 1994; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Rigid gender role stereotyping in society can precipitate girls' losing their voices and becoming passive bystanders in life (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Pipher, 1994). We can still see these societal influences in other areas, such as the media. Sax (2005) describes how the media, everything from movies to literature to video games incorporate the same theme of males rescuing females in their storylines. This perpetuates male superiority while relegating females to a submissive role in society. Additionally, Kilbourne (2002) shows how print advertisements, commercials, music videos, movies, television, and video games all contribute to the sexualization of female teenagers and girls start internalizing the messages that their beauty and bodies are their most important attributes. All of these gender stereotypes impact females' self-esteem. Furthermore, low self-confidence coupled with discrimination in the classroom and the invisibility of female accomplishments in curriculum could result in girls disconnecting from education.

Research on Latinas' disengagement in middle school and how the activation of social capital compels them to succeed academically are themes that are mirrored in the research on Latinas in high school. There are few articles that fully capture the complexities and intricacies of Latinas' experiences in school under the context of societal gender, race, and class issues. Ginorio and Huston's (2001) report on K-12 Latinas in education offers a comprehensive overview of Latinas in education; however, it misses a distinction of developmental or institutional differences and nuances for girls in elementary school, middle school, and the transition to high school. It is vital to explore each institutional age level of the educational pipeline. This is made evident in significant research by Katz (1999), who found that urban Latino/as were struggling in

middle school due to being "pushed out" of school by institutional racism, despite being exemplary and engaged elementary school students.

Ginorio and Huston's (2001) study does give a clearer picture of how high schools place Latinas at a disadvantage through institutional practices such as tracking and suspensions, while being underrepresented in Advanced Placement [AP] classes and Gifted and Talented Education. Solórzano and Ornelas (2002) echo this in their research on the lack of access for Latinas' participation in AP classes. These classes are an important opportunity and serve as a gateway to gain college credit and increase the chances of getting into universities. Additionally, Cammarota (2004) and Lopez (2002a) explored the gendered and racialized high school experiences for urban Latinos. Lopez concluded that Latinas in her study maintained a sense of optimism about school and believed that they could gain a sense of independence through education. Cammorota found that the Latinas in his study succeeded in high school as a way of showing respect to their mothers who struggled or to rise above their class status and to gain independence as young women. Despite these aspirations, the author also found that Latinas believed their teachers did not care for them since they had low expectations for them, which likely discouraged Latinas from school.

Research has shown a correlation between teacher disengagement and Latinas' disconnect with their school, not necessarily education (Bettie, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). Bettie's ethnography focused on the high school experiences of Mexican-American and white girls in California's Central Valley. Many of the Mexican-American students were tracked into vocational classes where substitute teachers and classroom chaos appeared to be quite common. It seems that the school or teachers were allowing this in a sense

because the curriculum or vocational classes did not matter, which caused girls not to care about the classes. Bettie found that the Mexican-American girls would routinely disengage from their vocational classes and engage in girl talk about idealized romance, whether it was talking about horoscopes or recent soap opera episodes. Unlike their male counterparts' confrontational acts of rebellion, these girls rejected the system in subtler, perhaps unnoticeable ways.

Despite these injustices, some Latinas flourish in high school due to maternal support and cultural capital. Research confirms that Latina mother-daughter relationships are key to Latinas' success in high school (Gonzalez, 1998; Marsiglia & Holleran, 1999; Turner, Kaplan, & Badger, 2006). Marsiglia and Holleran's (1999) work reflects Latina high school students embodying cultural pride through their role models, their mothers. Latina mothers instilled independence and the importance of education to their daughters in an effort to give them a better life. Bettie (2002) discovered working class Mexican American high school girls were motivated to succeed through family stories. Furthermore, Gonzalez (1998) finds messages about family sacrifices and the lack of education leading to working in fields or restaurants served as motivation for Latinas to have a better, more economically advantaged life. Bettie (2003) discusses the role of parents and their influence on Mexican-American females. Many of their parents valued education for their daughters, regardless of their own educational status. Additionally, their hard work in the fields or canneries inspired them to seek higher education. These messages are critical to understanding how Latinas succeed throughout the educational pipeline. It appears that familial stories and social capital are universally successive factors in each phase of the educational pipeline.

Regardless of a lack of institutional support, Latinas also fill the educational gap by providing social and educational advice towards their peers. Bettie (2003) found that Mexican-American girls who were taking college preparatory classes were involved in school activities such as organized sports, Ballet Folklorico, or EOP (Early Outreach Program) that invited teachers, administration, as well as peers to view them as college-going students. Bettie reveals that Mexican-American girls, who participated in sports, became friends with middle to upper class white peers and also benefited from counselors' and teachers' privileged attention that was normally reserved for white middle to upper class females. Valenzuela (1999) concludes that Mexican females in high school utilized their friendships for academic support and success. Not only did these females assist one another, but they also extended their help to their male friends.

As Bettie (2003) contends, this sometimes transcended to the exploitation of the "female helpers." Many of the females were responding to gender role expectations and spending an inordinate amount of time doing homework for their male friends, possibly at the detriment to their own academic work and familial responsibilities. Valenzuela (1999) suggests that, "A culture of romance thus reveals how gender inequality can minimize what would otherwise be a positive collective impact of social capital" (p. 147). It is clear that Latinas use social capital to get ahead academically, but one may wonder how much more they could achieve if the gender role expectations for females were less rigid. More research on younger Latinas needs to be done to explore how these gender stereotypes and nurturing gender roles plays a part in Latinas' school success.

Conclusion

Research regarding Latinas in elementary school through high school reflects

common themes that support Latinas' educational success or failure. Teachers who care about the education of their Latino/a students transcend to student engagement and educational persistence (Mireles-Rios & Romo, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999). Furthermore, when Latinas feel their teachers do not care or support their education, Latinas tend to disengage and not care about their school (Bettie, 2003; Meador, 2005; Rolón-Dow, 2004; Rolón-Dow, 2005). Additionally, teacher preparation classes need to incorporate more culturally sensitive information about ethnic groups to alleviate teacher stereotyping that continues to occur.

Despite negative stereotyping against Latinas, (Meador, 2005; Rolón-Dow, 2004; Rolón-Dow, 2005), they are able to thrive in elementary school through high school due to maternal encouragement and social capital. Latina mothers' emotional and inspirational support is key in Latinas' success throughout the educational pipeline (Gonzalez, 1998; Marsiglia & Holleran, 1999; Mireles-Rios & Romo, 2010; Turner, Kaplan, & Badger, 2006). This research replicates a wealth of studies that will be discussed in the next section that confirms that Latina mothers' motivation is vital to Latinas' success in college. Additionally, Bettie (2003) found that working class Mexican-American girls who were involved in school extra curricular activities had more opportunities to succeed since counselors and teachers viewed them as college-going students. These girls also had more frequent contacts with white middle to upper class females due to these activities and they were able to gain important knowledge of the college-going process from these relationships.

Navigating College: Latinas Activate Social and Cultural Capital For Success

Introduction

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2009c), women graduate with college degrees at a higher rate when compared to men and have been doing so since 1981. Regardless of these gains in higher education, women tend to suffer from gender inequalities in college. Reason and Rankin (2006) contend that one area where women experience gender discrimination in college is within the classroom itself. The classroom environment can play an important role in learning and encouraging classroom participation. Salter and Persaud (2003) looked at 142 female college students enrolled in engineering and education courses. Their results found that the classrooms that were more interactive due to faculty approachability and use of group work made female students more apt to speak up and contribute ideas in class or ask questions. Classrooms that were in a competitive atmosphere, where there was pressure to get the answer right, as well as a lack of openness from professor, left females feeling like they did not want to participate in discussions and further disengaged them from learning the material. These are important considerations, particularly when exploring how the college environment could impact Latinas who are also experiencing other obstacles in college because they are first people in their family to go to college.

There is significantly more research that focuses on Latinas in higher education in comparison to Latinas' experiences in middle or high school. Important themes regarding familial support and encouragement as well Latinas' commitment to give back to the Latino/as community emerged from the literature review. Research included Latinas' challenges in college as well as the cultural strengths of Latinas, and the

institutional strengths that maximize social capital for Latinas to aid them in successfully completing a baccalaureate degree.

Latinas' Challenges in College

The variables that affect Latinas' educational attainment are complex. Critical race theory is important in understanding how institutions maintain racist ideologies that can affect Latinas in higher education. Gloria, Castellanos, and Orozco (2005) determined that educational institutions produce an environment of cultural incongruity that undermines Latina academic persistence. Additionally, Cano and Castillo (2010) confirmed Latinas' higher distress levels due to a mismatch of cultural values between Latina college students and the college environment. If Latinas do not feel connected to their college and their academic experiences, then they perceive their college environment as negative. Wycoff (1996) contends that Latinas are treated differently as a result of racial bias and gender bias, like other women of color and face "double discrimination" due to gender and race. In a study by Aguilar (1996), nearly half of Mexican American female college students felt they had experienced sexism and racism. Diaz de Sabates (2007) reveals many stereotypes concerning Latina college students including being lazy, not having motivation, coming from an impoverished background, or the inadequacy of English language skills. These professors' stereotypes mimic commonly held labels from mainstream society. The feelings of isolation from discrimination permeate Latinas' college education and make them believe that they are invisible.

This marginalization was found in Losey's (1997) study on the pervasive silencing in Mexican American students, particularly female students, in an English

Composition class that contributed to patterns of silence and invisibility in written work and classroom participation. Losey's data reveal, "Mexican American women represented a majority in the class (47% of all students), yet they contributed only 12.5% of the initiations and 8% of the responses" (p. 150). Students who come from working class backgrounds have additional obstacles involving financial resources and fitting in with middle to upper class peers. This potential triple discrimination precipitates a lack of social supports and cultural networks that are vital to scholastic achievement.

One challenge Latinas face is access to college information and the practical knowledge on how to get there, particularly if they are first or second generational students. If parents or older siblings have never attended college, they are unable to assist first time students with survival skills in college to provide an understanding of certain situations where gender, race, and class issues are challenged. Diaz de Sabates (2007) confirmed that without the knowledge of how to navigate through higher education along with prejudicial injustices, Latinas would seek guidance outside of their families. For instance, Rosas and Hamrick (2002) found that Latina females were frustrated by the inability to discuss coursework with their parents who had never attended college. One student recalls a particular conversation with her mother:

> Sometimes I don't think she realizes how hard it is. She can't even pronounce some of my classes and she doesn't even know what I am taking. She doesn't know. My dad, too, and that is worst, because he doesn't ask at all. They don't really know what I am doing at school. They never really ask me what I do. It makes me feel sad. (Rosas & Hamrick, 2002, p. 65)

This inability to communicate and connect with families regarding the challenges of academic coursework further isolates Latinas.

Another obstacle experienced by Latinas is in the conflicted feelings of leaving home to attend college (Diaz de Sabates, 2007; Gonzalez, Jovel, & Stoner, 2004). Most students regardless of their ethnicity encounter feelings of excitement in becoming more independent coupled with some apprehension in leaving their family when moving away to college. Gonzalez, Jovel, and Stoner (2004) found that college age Latinas showed enthusiasm in gaining independence and a sense of guilt in regards to leaving the family. Latina students were faced with family expectations and obligations. Some women expressed feelings of being caught between two cultures, feeling pressured to preserve traditional values while adhering to modern demands (Diaz de Sabates, 2007; Wycoff, 1996).

The complexity of newfound independence is sometimes overshadowed by familial closeness that is characteristic of many Latina families. Gonzalez, Jovel, and Stoner (2004) as well as research by Wycoff (1996) discovered that Latina parents were very supportive of their daughters attending college; however, parents wanted their daughters to stay near their family homes. This conflict manifests itself to feelings of guilt for students. One student described her mother's reaction to finding out she was accepted into the University of California, Berkeley:

> My mom was sad. I remember when I found out, she was in the kitchen. I said, "Mom! I got in!" And she said, "Oh, now you are leaving." And then she stayed quiet. I felt like I had to apologize, even though I was happy. (Gonzalez, Jovel & Stoner, 2004, p. 20)

These tensions transform feelings of excitement to feelings of doubt in gaining independence for Latina students. "Nearly every student in our study had something to say about their parents' concern about who would take care of them" (Gonzalez, Jovel, &

Stoner, 2004, p .20). These messages potentially decrease self-esteem as it reinforces the idea of dependency rather than autonomy.

Family intimacy and closeness can increase feelings of dependency and sadness for students away from home for the first time; consequently, most students experience homesickness. Rosas and Hamrick (2002) found that most Latina females in college severely missed family members, despite frequent phone contact. Gonzalez, Jovel, and Stoner (2004) also found that Latina women experienced homesickness, not exclusively as freshmen, but as something that troubled them throughout their college years. Latinas expressed disappointment in missing out on fiestas, birthdays, holidays, and the day-to-day changes in newborn nieces or nephews. In an effort to set Latinas up for success in their college education, institutions need to be mindful of the importance of family connections and the roles they play in furthering academic retention and success.

Looking at the overview of literature, it is evident that Latinas face multiple obstacles in college that potentially could undermine their success, such as sexism and racism on college campuses (Aguilar, 1996) or low academic expectations from college professors (Diaz de Sabates, 2007). Latinas may experience a lack of connection with their college campus due to cultural incongruity (Cano & Castillo, 2010; Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005) and self-silencing in the classroom (Losey, 1997). Latinas experience higher degrees of homesickness when moving away to college (Gonzalez, Jovel, & Stoner, 2004; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002) and feel pressured by parents to attend campuses that are closer to home (Gonzalez, Jovel, & Stoner, 2004; Wycoff, 1996). Latinas overcame these barriers by activating their social and cultural capital through close family ties and to their communities.

Latinas' Cultural Strengths

Family as a means of social capital is one of the most important and influential factors in determining success for Latinas. Yosso (2005) recognizes the prominence of close family and community relationships in her work on familial capital where success and motivation are fostered through kinship as well as a close connection to their community. Additionally, Yosso believes that parents who inspire hope for their children in gaining a better life despite current familial hardships and obstacles, give their children aspirational capital. Latinas, who were more positive about their college careers, also reported high levels of support from family and friends (Aguilar, 1996; Castillo & Hill, 2004; Ceja, 2004; Gloria, 1997; Gonzalez, Stoner, & Jovel, 2003). Research by Garza (1998) has suggested that pre-college factors such as early education and familial support had more impact on Mexican American women's success in academics rather than the ethnicity or gender make-up of the university. Wycoff's (1996) quantitative study on Mexican American women found there was significance in the relationship between educational attainment with familial encouragement and support, particularly mothers.

The impact of mothers' influence on academic achievement has been well researched. A study by Garza (1998) supported research by both Garcia (2004) and Gándara (1995), which discovered that a mother's encouragement and repeated verbal affirmations is found to be a highly important factor in daughters completing college. Those studies specifically looked at parental and background influences on higher education for Latinas. Ceja (2004) looked at first generation college-bound Chicana students and found that their mothers' storytelling were key in developing their college aspirations and the use of their current occupation or economic struggles as a way to

motivate their daughters to move beyond their current economic status. Ogbu and Simons (1998) would define this as a positive dual frame of reference when mothers highlight the opportunities available here in the United States as compared to their native land. Education is viewed as a bridge to improving lives and escaping their parents' financial and educational struggles. Garza (1998) found this belief to be consistent among all Latina mothers regardless of their own educational background; therefore, all mothers supported their daughters' academic goals. Villenas and Moreno (2001) captured these nuances of Latina mother-daughter pedagogies in their study. The researchers describe the delicate balance of mothers' stories and life experiences used as strategies to combat societal racism and sexism as a way to impart independence, while maintaining ideologies of being good, traditional wives. I think it is worthwhile to examine the link between these cultural strengths and academic aspirations as an opportunity to enhance academic achievement in young Latinas.

Different Latina class backgrounds should also be recognized as a source of strength and resiliency in overcoming adversity. Aguilar (1996) also established that 38% of Mexican American female students acknowledged that family values and the ability to survive poverty helped them reach their goals. This epitomizes the funds of knowledge approach where a perceived negative environment of poverty really fostered perseverance in Latinas rising above challenging circumstances.

The importance of community is also key to understanding what inspires Latinas. One way Latinas accomplished this was by building community with their peers in college. Barajas and Pierce (2001) found that Latinas were able to successfully navigate college by having a positive cultural image through supportive relationships with other

Latinas on campus. Gándara (1995) found that almost all of the Chicano women she interviewed felt that student groups were instrumental in keeping them focused academically and connected by their relationships with others. A network of support from peers can also provide emotional support along with practical knowledge.

Many Latina women expressed commitments, not only towards their own peers or families, but also to the community in which they came (Bernal, 2001; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002). Bernal (2001) found that Latinas often seek purpose in altruism and have a strong interest in helping their communities. This example of social capital is highlighted in Bernal's interview with one woman who expressed how her education could benefit others in their community:

> Well one of the things is that for me, if I get an education then that means that some other Mexican Americans are going to be able to get an education too. . . . . I'm going to go back and help out my community and . . . . try to help out those people that can go to college and push them up. (p. 632)

Other research also centers on Latinas' commitment to community, which activates social capital and a cycle of educational success that gets passed on from one generation to the next (Cammarota, 2004; Ginorio & Huston, 2001). The idea of role models and mentors providing opportunities for other women in the same community serves as a useful tool in promoting educational attainment in a broader scope.

Looking at cultural assets, such as familial or community ties amongst Latinas is vital to bridge the academic gap and important in understanding what motivates Latina women. Instead of focusing on cultural deficits within a community, educators need to look at Latinas' social capital. Moll, Gonzalez, and Amanti (2005) describe a fund of knowledge approach that observes household pedagogy and traditions as a gateway to

succeed in education. Exploring what social networks inspire Latinas in school is critical. Gonzalez, Stoner, and Jovel (2003) found that family members can act as agents of social capital to inspire their children to earn a postsecondary degree. Yosso (2005) has found many factors that are the foundation of community cultural wealth. Much of the research found on Latinas' academic success centers on how Latinas were able to activate social capital through a variety of resources in their communities, whether it was through their families, community connections, rebelling against racist schooling practices, or becoming inspired by their own parents' struggles and sacrifices.

Programs That Maximize Social Capital For Latinas

Schools and universities can also aid Latinas by providing culturally relevant programs to aid in their success. Programs that help Latinas activate social capital through their family relationships, community connections, and their cultural ties to college campus are key in regards to college retention. In this section, I will concentrate on the research of programs that specifically are geared towards assisting Latinas in obtaining baccalaureate degrees. There are many successful programs that focus on Latino/as' academic goals, but my aim is to research programs that focus solely on Latinas and their unique gendered experiences.

This is important since the National Center for Educational Statistics (2010b) report that Latinas are severely underrepresented in college completion rates. First, our academies should value diversity rather than forced assimilation (Valdés, 1997). Second, educational institutions need to foster caring environments that provide academically and

culturally relevant curriculum (Valenzuela, 1999). It is important to improve on the existing low numbers of Latina high school and college graduates.

Some community colleges are acknowledging diversity and providing opportunities for underrepresented women to utilize transfer agreements with elite private colleges (Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, Morphew, & Sopcich, 2004). The idea of transferring to an elite school would have been nonexistent if these nontraditional students of color were not given the exposure to specialized transfer agreements. Some Latinas may be hesitant in attending smaller, predominantly white colleges in rural areas; however, transfer programs can address this through innovative summer programs. Furthermore, Wolf-Wendel et. al (2004) report that allowing potential students to visit and experience the campus first before deciding can alleviate any fears or concerns. This can be potentially beneficial for nontraditional students of color, single mothers, or older students.

One university is incorporating innovative and comprehensive educational opportunities for Latinas. Santovec (2004) found that Mount St. Mary's College in California is using Title V grant funds to start a Transition Center that mentor and support Latinas, while educating their faculty on Latino/a culture and its effect on pedagogy. When institutions start respecting Latinas by offering specialized programs geared to their unique needs and incorporating faculty in this mindset, then this can transcend to institutional transformation. Respect encompasses validating and honoring cultural efficacy and differences. Santovec also reveals that in the fall of 2003, Latinas made up 55% of Mount St. Mary's College entering class. In light of the extremely low

numbers of Latinas in higher education, these numbers are astounding and reflect the reality that Latinas want to excel in the academy.

Some higher education institutions are also recognizing familial bonds and incorporating innovative ideas to promote academic success for Latinas. According to Hernandez, Vargas-Lew, and Martinez (1994), the University of Texas at San Antonio Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program is based on the idea of targeting eighth-grade Hispanic girls and their mothers to support them through the transition to college. Latinas in this program showed a tendency of having higher levels of ambition and educational goals across generations. This is a good example of how honoring familial relationships can enhance Latinas' undergraduate attainment.

Other variables that affect Latinas' academic success include the cultural inclusiveness of campus environments. Wolf-Wendel (1998) studied the baccalaureate success of three groups of women including European American students, African-American women and Latinas. This study suggested that Hispanic-serving women's colleges issued the most baccalaureate degrees for Latinas, followed by white women's colleges and Hispanic serving coeducational institutions. Minority students who may feel invisible or alienated in a predominantly white institution will inevitably be seen as a valid part of an institution that nurtures diversity or caters to a predominantly female environment. Wolf-Wendel also conclude that college is a time of great transition and Latinas may feel more comfortable and welcome if they are attending a school where there are others around that look like them. By examining what works in institutions that are successful in validating race and class issues, predominantly white coeducational

colleges can learn from Hispanic-serving and women only colleges to incorporate inclusiveness within their own colleges.

As shown in the previous section, Latinas face some obstructions in the educational pipeline once they reach college. These obstacles can include the lack of understanding from family members regarding difficult coursework and the challenges they confront in college (Rosas & Hamrick, 2002), and the conflicted feelings of leaving home (Gonzalez, Jovel, & Stoner, 2004). Despite these challenges, Latinas are able to succeed in college by activating cultural capital through familial support (Aguilar, 1996; Castillo & Hill, 2004; Ceja, 2004; Gloria, 1997; Gonzalez, Stoner, & Jovel, 2003), mothers' encouragement (Ceja, 2004; Gandara, 1995; Garcia, 2004; Garza, 1998), and a commitment to give back to the Latino/a community (Bernal, 2001; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002). Additionally, Latinas thrive in programs or universities that validate their unique gendered experiences through transfer agreements and college tours (Wolf-Wendel et. al, 2004), Hispanic-serving universities (Wolf-Wendel, 1998), and programs such as the Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program that honors familial relationships as well as provides invaluable information on the college going process (Hernandez, Vargas-Lew, & Martinez, 1994).

Final Analysis

There is significant evidence that establishes gender discrimination in schools (AAUW, 1999; Orenstein, 1994; Owens, Smothers, & Love, 2003; Sadker, 2000; Sadker & Sadker, 1994), institutional or teacher racism (Katz, 1999; Niemann, 2001; Quiroz, 2001; Valencia & Black, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999) and socioeconomic bias in education

(Frey, 2002; McLoyd, 1998; Mutua, 2001). However, there is a lack of research that intersects these three elements of prejudices of gender, race, and class as barriers to academic efficacy for Latinas.

Overall, most of the academic research on Latinas in education is predominantly based in qualitative work. Some of the advantages of this is much of the older research focused on deficit views; whereas, more recent research is centered on hearing the voices of underrepresented students. Qualitative research is a perfect marriage of scholarly ideologies partnered with lived experiences and stories of underrepresented people. One of the disadvantages of qualitative research is the low sample number of the participants involved in studies. It is harder to make generalizations about a group of people with limited information and participants.

In reviewing journal articles regarding Latinas and the educational pipeline, it is clear that more comprehensive research in this area needs to be done. Most research tends to lump Latino/as in one group, ignoring the exclusive gendered characteristics of Latina students. There are no research articles that focus on Latinas' experiences in elementary school and approximately six journal articles on Latinas in middle school. Additionally, there is a scarcity of research on Latinas' educational experiences in high school. Ginorio and Huston (2001) contributed important analysis of how Latinas face institutional discrimination in high school and the importance of families and social capital as ways that some Latinas make it out of high school. Regardless of these inequities, Latinas continue to thrive in high school due to maternal support and social capital. The culmination of research on Latinas in high school emphasize that strong

relationships with their mothers transcend to academic success (Gonzalez, 1998; Marsiglia & Holleran, 1999; Turner, Kaplan, & Badger, 2006). In addition, Bettie (2002) determined that working class Mexican American high school girls were inspired to excel in school through family stories.

Mothers appear to be significant factors in Latinas' success in adolescence as well as in college. Three studies by Garza (1998), Hernandez, Vargas-Lew, and Martinez (1994) and Wycoff (1996) emphasized the influence of mothers as being key to nurturing success for Latinas in a college setting. A mother's encouragement has been found to be a predictor of success for daughters remaining in college (Garza, 1998; Hernandez, Vargas-Lew, & Martinez, 1994; Wycoff, 1996). Hernandez, Vargas-Lew, and Martinez (1994) studied the academic aspirations for nine mother/daughter dyads and found that programs that support this type of familial capital were beneficial to ensuring collegiate success; however, more research needs to be done.

There are significantly more articles that focus on baccalaureate experiences of Latinas in the past ten years. Cuadraz (2005) highlighted key studies and significant factors related to Latinas and collegiate attainment in the past three decades. There appears to be gaps in older research recognizing the cultural assets associated with successful completion of undergraduate degrees; consequently, most of the earlier studies focused on refuting the stereotypes that placed Latinas in an inferior position. Rodriguez and Morrobel's (2004) review of 1,010 journal articles in Latino/a and youth oriented research journals, found that few articles focused exclusively on Latino/a youth and when they did, the research overwhelming focused on deficits.

Despite these findings, this researcher found a significant number of journal articles that confirmed the importance of family, community, and institutional support in order for Latinas to succeed at the collegiate level. All underrepresented students have to deal with discrimination and invisibility within a dominant white culture whether it is in the classroom, curriculum, or the institution itself. The support of family, community, and institutions can help alleviate the stresses that accompany bias on a college campus.

It is also important to explore how evidence of institutional practices of gender, race, and class stereotyping marginalizes Latinas in schools and how they rise above these circumstances to become college graduates. Currently, there are no studies that focus solely on Latinas' experiences throughout the K -16 educational pipeline. This research will utilize CRF as its theoretical framework to analyze the participants' stories through the lens of gender, race, and class and how these ideas interact and impact Latinas' educational experiences through the pipeline. It will also contribute new ideas and fill a void in scholarly work. The distinction of studying what works for undergraduate Latinas is valuable to improve support for future generations of females who are underrepresented students. The practical implications from this work will contribute to educational administrators, educators, and policy makers' knowledge of what works and does not work to increase the numbers of Latinas succeeding in college.

It is important for additional examination of the links between family and community support for Latinas in attaining higher education degrees. In an effort to foster success, educators and administrators can create outreach programs, summer programs, bilingual materials for parents, and promote Latino campus organizations and sororities in an attempt to make success in college more likely for underserved Latinas. I

think it is also particularly important to study how Latina mothers can provide additional support for their daughters. This qualitative research study will reveal Latinas' experiences in education, while examining the challenges, cultural strengths, and social capital related to the success of Latinas in obtaining baccalaureate degrees, in an effort to promote self-efficacy and further college success for future generations.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Restatement of Purpose

This qualitative research study includes nine dialogues with Latinas who are the first in their families to have successfully completed their undergraduate degrees. The purpose of this work was to discover and describe Latinas' successes and barriers throughout the educational pipeline to gain a better understanding of the internal and external factors that lead to college success for Latinas.

Research Design

Critical Race Theory (CRT) seeks to highlight social injustices and give a voice to marginalized people. Although I am using Critical Race Feminism (CRF) as my theoretical rationale, it is important to understand the history of CRT, from which CRF emerges from. According to Wing (2003), CRT stemmed from a gap in our American legal system. Historically, laws and our court system were used to uphold social justice and provide equity for all. CRT recognizes that racism is inherent in society and the legal system is part of the problem. CRT acknowledges the historical ideas of the social construction of race and how the legal system favors some races and discriminates against others. These racist practices continue to occur today and reflect institutional discrimination in other areas of society, including education. Many theoretical branches have developed from the foundation of critical race theory, including CRF.

Critical Race Feminism (CRF) is vital to my methodology as it serves as a tool to examine the complexities and fluid identities of Latinas. This theoretical framework will acknowledge the multiplicities of individual experiences, while providing important

cultural contributions and themes regarding them as a group as well. These tenets are particularly important in my research on Latinas' success in higher education as much of the research focuses on the low numbers of completion rates for Latinas in college and the "problems" of the Latino community that perpetuate these low numbers. There is a need for more research that focuses on the ways that colleges are failing Latinas, rather than how Latinas are failing out of schools. Ladson-Billings (1998) says, "Oppression is rationalized, causing little self-examination by the oppressor. Stories by people of color can catalyze the necessary cognitive conflict to jar dysconscious racism" (p. 14). The narratives in this study serve to counter dominant ideologies by documenting how Latinas overcame institutional barriers to succeed in higher education.

My methodological approach is qualitative narrative research using counterstories as a strategy of inquiry. Counterstories are key to this research as they provide a useful research tool that complements the theoretical rationale of Critical Race Feminism (CRF). Counterstories reveal the complexities of individual experiences as well as the group as a whole. Women of color have been historically invisible in research and CRF seeks to change that by giving a voice to the voiceless. Women of color have unique gendered experiences and stories that differ from men of color because of sex role differences and vary from mainstream feminists due to race and class distinction. CRF fulfills this gap to provide counter spaces for women of color to add their own influences and understandings to academic research.

Counterstories serve as an important framework in understanding the complexities of individual and collectives experiences of marginalized people. Critical race counterstories serve as a retelling of dominant narratives that often describe the lives

of marginalized people from a deficit perspective (Bernal, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2006). Bernal's (1998) work elucidates the importance of documenting the stories of marginalized people because usually these voices are not heard. These counterstories can be used as a tool to challenge negative images and ideas.

This qualitative research study utilizes counter narratives as a primary source of data. One important aspect of counter narratives is the use of collaboration in maintaining a continual dialogue with participants to ensure the validity of the research findings. The use of counterstories offers a space for genuine dialogues between the researcher and participants to occur. Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall, & Jackson (1993) emphasize the importance of dialogue as a tool to "produce not just factual knowledge but also interpersonal and critical knowledge" (p. 12). Essential to dialogues' authenticity is true collaboration. Fine (1994) states, "the strength of feminist activist research lies in its ability to open contradictions and conflicts within collaborative practices" (p. 23). Collaboration is imperative to getting at the heart of complex issues regarding gender, race, and class issues. Park et al. (1993) describes this connection between researchers and participants as interactive knowledge. "This knowledge does not derive from analysis of data about other human beings but from sharing a life-world together against the background of common experience, tradition, history, and culture. Interactive knowledge makes human community possible" (Park et al., p. 6).

Data Collection and Analysis

I chose nine Latinas who are first generation college students that have successfully completed their baccalaureate degrees within the past three years. I used

purposeful convenience sampling to ensure that my participants are recent graduates, have attended school (K-16) in the United States, and are the first in their family to graduate from college. I teach at CSUS so some of my participants included Latinas who are former students of mine from CSUS or friends of my former students. All of the participants have graduated within the past three years to reflect more recent experiences through the educational pipeline. The Latina participants are a representative sample of the diversity and demographics of Latinas. Although, all of the participants are graduates of California State University, Sacramento, the students come from different socio-economic backgrounds, generational status, bilingual/monolingual, immigration patterns, and have lived in other states or outside of the country

Research on the demographics of the CSUS, Sacramento campus, face-to-face dialogues with each participant, subsequent conversations with participants through e-mail, and their journals all served as tools in the data collection process. Many of the participants were generous in sharing their stories and insights, with many of the face-to-face dialogues lasting 90 minutes to two hours. I used five open-ended questions to encourage their educational stories to unfold. These questions were given to the participants two weeks before the dialogues took place, to help them remember experiences that occurred throughout their educational experiences. Although, I had these five questions, I often developed new questions during our conversations as their stories unfolded to gain further clarity. The participants decided on the setting in which they wanted the dialogues to take place. The one-on-one dialogues were tape recorded to ensure accurate and thorough information.

Approximately three to four weeks after the dialogues took place participants

submitted their Microsoft Word journals to me. Participants were asked to document their early schooling experiences in journals in an effort to give them some time to recall those early experiences as well as any additional memories that resurface during the research study. After this process, I continued to receive e-mails from some participants with additional thoughts or stories that they recalled about their educational or personal journey. One important aspect of collaboration is maintaining a continual dialogue with participants to ensure the validity of the research findings. Dialogues are advantageous to this research since participants are able to provide comprehensive historical information about their educational experiences through a broad period of time, elementary school through their completion of undergraduate degrees.

I then transcribed all of the participant's one on one dialogues, journal entries, and e-mails into Microsoft Word documents to prepare them for analysis. Following the organization and preparation of the transcribed interviews and participants' journal entries, I read through all the data, recording any impressions or general thoughts in the margins. As I read, I synthesized the information by looking for patterns or common themes in my participants' experiences. I incorporated Creswell's (2003) recommendations for coding the information from my research, by finding common themes. This type of open coding was useful in identifying conceptual categories that could potentially serve as a preliminary framework for my research. A list of relevant themes were abbreviated as codes and written next to any segment of information that correlated with this idea. I then color-coded the different categories using various colored tabs on segments of the transcripts and highlighted the stories and quotes accordingly. Next, I utilized Creswell's (2003) work on axial coding that is a more

focused approach to incorporate the common themes into a deeper level of analysis. After I developed the overall themes, I looked at these themes in new ways by creating sub-categories, and linked them back to existing ideas and theories in research as well as came up with my own theoretical analysis, which will be introduced in the last chapter.

After I completed Chapter IV and V, I shared my written work with the participants for their feedback. Creswell (2005) describes member checking as a process in which the researcher confers with participants regarding the accuracy of their work. My participants read transcribed copies of my completed work to gauge fairness and truthful representations of their stories. To further validate my findings, I used triangulation to ensure accuracy within my work. Creswell (2005) defines triangulation as a process of corroborating evidence using different modes of information, people, or processes, which include the collaboration of different people, types of data, or multiple methods of data collection. I also utilized two methods of data collection: dialogues and journals written by the participants on their reflections throughout the research process.

Research Setting

The study takes place in Sacramento, California. Nestled in the Central Valley, Sacramento is a unique city known for its rich agriculture, ethnic diversity, and burgeoning downtown area. Most of my participants come from Sacramento, or smaller rural areas in the Central Valley, or the nearby Bay Area. All of them have attended and graduated from California State University, Sacramento [CSUS].

CSUS has a fairly large campus and typically enrolls 29,000 students per year. The majority of CSUS students' commute to school and work either part-time or full-time. This suggests that CSUS students juggle the responsibilities of work, family

obligations, children, and marriage as well as being full-time students. Ethnicity at CSUS reflects the diversity of the Sacramento community itself. Latinos represent approximately 15% of the students at Sac State as well as 20% of Sacramento county residents.

There are several programs at CSUS to assist underrepresented students in order to ensure high college retention and completion rates. The Educational Opportunity Program [EOP] is an educational access and retention program that supports low-income educationally disadvantaged students, many of who are first generation college students. College Assistance Migrant Program [CAMP] helps students from migrant and seasonal farm worker backgrounds to succeed in college. They assist students in their transition from high school to college and offers services to develop the skills necessary to graduate from college. Additionally, Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan [MEChA] is a campus organization that promotes academic success and honoring cultural heritage by sponsoring campus cultural events.

Questions to Guide the Initial Dialogue

Research Question 1: How did gender, race, and class issues facilitate or impede success for Latinas in their K – 8 experiences?

a. Who or what influenced you to succeed in elementary and middle school?

b. What barriers did you face in succeeding in your K-8 education?

Research Question 2: How did gender, race, and class impact Latinas' high school experiences and decision to attend college?

a. What factors influenced you to go to college?

b. What educational obstacles did you face in high school?

c. How did gender, race, or class issues impact your motivation to succeed in school or impede your success in school?

Research Question 3: What barriers did Latinas face as the first people in their families to attend college and how did they overcome them?

a. What factors inspired you to complete college?

b. How did your being the first in your family to attend college impact your educational journey?

Profile of Participants

Alejandra

Alejandra is a 25 year-old Chicana who grew up in Monterey County, in the small town of Watsonville in a predominately Hispanic neighborhood. Her parents who emigrated here from Mexico worked in the fields when Alejandra was growing up. She has four brothers and she is the second to the youngest child in her family. She is bilingual and graduated with a B.A. in Sociology in the spring of 2011 at CSUS and is currently in a Masters Program in Vocational Counseling at CSUS.

Bianca

Bianca is a 25 year-old Mexican American woman at the time of this study. Her parents were born in Mexico and both are field workers in Kern County. She grew up in Wasco, California, which is in Kern County, and she describes the town as "mostly Hispanic." She is the oldest of six children and is bilingual. Her first language was Spanish and then she learned English in kindergarten. Bianca graduated with a B.A. in Spanish and a minor in Business in December of 2009 at CSUS.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is a 25 year-old bilingual Chicana. She was born in Mexico to Mexican parents and moved to the United States when she was five years old. She is the oldest of four siblings. Her dad is a truck driver and her mom is a pastry chef. She grew up in St. Helena in the Napa Valley in a mostly upper class town "where everyone was expected to go to college." Elizabeth graduated with a B.A. in Sociology in 2009 at CSUS and wants to continue her post baccalaureate education and become a nurse.

Gabriela

Gabriela is a 27-year-old Mexican American woman whose parents are both from Mexico. They met here in the late 1970s in Stockton, California, a culturally diverse area where Gabriela eventually grew up with two younger sisters. Both of her parents work seasonally in canneries. She is proficient in three languages, including English, Spanish, and American Sign Language. Gabriela graduated in May 2011 with a B.A. in Deaf Studies/American Sign Language at CSUS.

Gloria

Gloria is a 27 year-old Mexican American woman whose parents migrated here from Mexico in 1980. They had three children in Mexico and three in the United States. Out of her three brothers and two sisters, Gloria is the only one who went to college. She grew up in Seaside, California, near Monterey, in a culturally diverse blue-collar neighborhood. Gloria graduated with a B.A. in Criminal Justice at CSUS in the spring of 2009.

Isaura

Isaura is a 23 year-old Mexican American woman whose parents met and

married in Mexico and then immigrated here to the Central Valley to find agricultural work. Isaura was born here and is bilingual. Both parents worked in the fields when she was growing up. Her mom is a cosmetologist and works seasonally in a winery doing maintenance and her dad now supervises for field laborers and does payroll for them. She is the oldest of three siblings and has two younger brothers. They grew up in the small town of Soledad in Monterey County, where a lot of Latinos lived. Isaura graduated with a B.A. degree in Communication Studies in December 2009 at CSUS. She is currently obtaining her Bilingual Multicultural Teaching Credential at CSUS.

Kristina

Kristina is a 23 year-old woman who is monolingual and biracial. Her dad is Mexican and works as a construction supervisor. Her mom is Italian and works as a librarian. She has one brother and grew up in Redding, California and attended schools with predominantly middle class white students. Kristina graduated with a B.A. in Health Science with a concentration in Health Care Administration in May 2011 at CSUS.

Lori

Lori is a 30 year-old Mexican American woman whose parents are Mexican. Her parents divorced when Lori was five years old, so her single mother primarily raised her. She has one younger brother. Her family lived in Pomona in Southern California, in what she describes as a "low-income community." Lori describes herself as being "conversational bilingual," able to carry on casual dialogue, but nothing too complex. Her mom worked at and continues to work at a community college in Pomona. Lori graduated with a B.A. in Sociology in 2009 at CSUS.

Sophia

Sophia is a 25 year-old Latina whose Mexican parents were born in the United States. They were the first ones in their families to be born here. Her parents divorced when she was three years old, so she grew up with a single mom and her dad wasn't around much. Her mom has worked as a receptionist in the past, but now she is a clerk and recorder at a courthouse. She has three half siblings from her dad, but she lived with only her mom and her grandparents on her mom's side until she was ten years old. She grew up in the small agricultural town of Arbuckle, California in Colusa County. Sophia graduated with a B.A. degree in English in May 2011 and is currently enrolled in the Multiple Subject Teaching Credential program at CSUS.

The following table illustrates some general demographics regarding the participants in this study.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Name	Birthplace	Parents' Birthplace	Language(s) Spoken	Community College (yrs.)	University-(yrs)
Alejandra	Mexico	Mexico	Spanish English	0	6
Bianca	U. S.	Mexico	Spanish English	0	5.5
Elizabeth	Mexico	Mexico	Spanish English	3	3
Gabriela	U.S.	Mexico	Spanish English American Sign	5	2

Gloria	U.S.	Mexico	Spanish English	4	2
Isaura	U.S.	Mexico	Spanish English	0	4
Kristina	U.S.	U.S.	English	0	5
Lori	U.S.	Mexico	English Spanish	6.5	4.5
Sophia	U.S.	U.S.	Spanish English	5	2

Profile of the Researcher

From an early age, I have been conscious of racism. My mom immigrated to the United States from Peru. Due to her darker skin and thick Spanish accent, I have early memories of people, whether it was teachers, principals, or sales people in stores talking down to her or diverting their questions or comments towards me, even though I was only six or seven years old. The sting of the negativity of racism has extended to my own experiences and to my friends of different races. I always wanted to know "why" the world existed under this umbrella of institutional racism. More importantly, I wanted to find people with strong voices who resisted these dominant ideologies.

As a Latina of mixed race, I have been both an outsider and an insider in the Latino community. Most people do not immediately know my ethnicity, which prompts them to ask, "What are you?" Born in the Bay Area in California to working-class, monolingual English-speaking parents (my mom is bilingual, but did not speak Spanish at home), without a Spanish surname, I could "pass" as an insider of dominant White

culture. In this way, I have benefited somewhat from White privilege. On the other hand, in some situations, people see me as an outsider due to my mixed heritage. I have been tracked in lower reading classes despite being an avid, well read child, discouraged from Advanced Placement classes in high school, and dissuaded from college by school counselors. Most importantly, I struggled in my efforts to get to college, as I was the first in my family to attend a university. Within each of these situations, there are multiple layers of oppression working here. Wood (2001) finds that "standpoint theory focuses on how gender, race, and class influence the circumstances of individuals' lives, especially their positions in society and the kinds of experiences those positions foster" (p. 57).

It is exactly these complexities that have fueled my passion for social justice. I have enjoyed a decade long career in Social Work, where I watched marginalized people emerge as agents of change through education, training, and community activism. Currently as a teacher at California State University, Sacramento, I have the privilege of having these classroom conversations regarding gender, race, and class issues with groups of diverse students in my classroom. It is my hope that they continue this dialogue with the people in their lives and through their work with others.

In my conversations with Latinas in higher education, I realize that my insider/outsider status may provide some challenges to my research. The research participants may see me as an outsider due to my level of education, my work as a professor, as well as our age differences. At the same time, they may feel more comfortable talking to me as an insider due to a shared culture, having an immigrant parent, and experiencing shared struggles through the educational pipeline.

Protection of Human Subjects

This research followed the guidelines and procedures set forth by the University of San Francisco's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects [IRBPHS]. All of the participants chose to use their first names for this study. I stored all research materials in a locked file cabinet to be destroyed five years after the research has been completed.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter illuminates the power of counterstories and how the following nine participants counter dominant ideologies and stereotypes of Latinas. Their collective stories paint a picture of resiliency and triumph. Each participant's journey is unique, but there were common themes that aided in their success in education. Yosso's (2005) work on community cultural wealth was evident in the reasons why many of the participants in this study succeeded in college. This chapter presents an overview of broad generative themes that appeared in participants' responses to my research questions: 1) What factors contribute to Latinas' success in school?; 2) What obstacles did Latinas confront in their educational experiences?; 3) How did gender, race, and class issues impact their education?; and 4) How are Latinas' impacted by their accomplishment of being the first in their families to complete an undergraduate degrees? To elucidate the findings of my participants, I have included their stories and themes that emerged from my research questions.

Research Question 1:

What Factors Contributed To Latinas' Success In School?

Parental Support: Teaching Cultural Resiliency

Parents were a common theme for all of the participants when asked what inspired them to do well throughout their schooling experiences and attend college. Participants described their parents as being motivators to do well in school through three sub-themes: 1) to have a better life than their parents; 2) parents' emphasis on the

importance of education; and 3) parents' verbal encouragement. All of these factors contribute to Yosso's (2005) ideas on aspirational capital. The researcher refers to aspirational capital as how children maintain hope in attaining their goals through constant parental emotional support and parental dreams for a better quality of life for their own children. Participants also talked about other sources of inspiration throughout their educational journeys such as their internal motivation to succeed, wanting to give back to their families or communities, and encouragement from school resources that included caring teachers, counselors, and/or educational programs. One or more of these variables served to motivate the participants. Peers played a smaller role in the participants' lives; however, several participants discussed the importance of peers in their academic success. Two participants had traumatic life experiences that came at a critical turning point in their lives and gave them incentives to change the direction of their lives.

Heightened Aspirations Through Familial Reinforcement

Participants were highly motivated to succeed in education and life through familial reinforcement. This reinforcement was displayed in various ways. Many parents role modeled a hard work ethic balanced with their desires for their children to work in less arduous jobs to gain a better quality of life. Participants, Bianca, Gloria, Kristina, Isaura, and Lori all said that they wanted to further their education and go to college so they could gain more opportunities for a more comfortable and easier life than their parents where they did not have to work as hard physically as their parents. They saw how hard their parents worked and also wished for more financially stable lives. This issue appeared prominently in the stories of Bianca and Isaura whose parents worked in

low paying, physically demanding work in the agricultural fields of the Central Valley, and Gloria whose parents worked in service industry fields such as landscaping and housekeeping. Isaura recounts:

> Both of my parents always told me you need to do good in school if you don't want to work in the fields. That was a big motivation for me, because I grew up with my grandma, while my dad and my mom were working in the fields during the morning and the day. I remember seeing my parents, how they would come from the fields, their shoes were muddy, they were really tired, and my mom still had to do the housewife part of the day, which is getting home, taking a shower, starting dinner for my dad or me and my brothers. Not wanting to work in the fields was a big motivation.

Not wanting to follow in her parents' footsteps of working in the fields was echoed by Bianca's childhood experiences:

> Their words were look what we went through, don't go through the same steps, so that was something that motivated me, like just seeing what they went through, I don't want to go through the same, and have better opportunities in life. Overall, it was motivation from my parents, seeing what they went through working in the fields, hot temperatures, very tired when they got home. I don't want to do the same thing, I want a better life for myself and my future kids.

Gloria also explains this in her response as wanting a different life than her parents where she is afforded decent pay, enough to live on. She says:

> Growing up, seeing my parents work hard and working under their bosses, the amount of work that they did and how much they got paid and how they raised my family with the little bit that they earned, you know kind of pushed me to do good in school and to look for a different route that you know that I would be able to work not as hard as them and get paid ok, a decent living, I guess.

Many of the participants viewed education as a gateway for increased job opportunities and a better quality of life. The link between education as an entry to a better life and increased career prospects is also evident in Kristina's response when asked what influenced her to go to college:

> I think just because I wanted to have a better life than what I saw. Neither of my parents went to college, and like, they did well for themselves. But I just wanted to be the first in my family to actually get a degree. I originally wanted to be a nurse, so that's always been my goal, just to be a nurse, growing up, that's what I thought I wanted to do. I wanted to better myself.

Although Kristina came from a middle class background, she felt inspired to surpass her parents' success. Lori felt motivated to do better in school and life by watching her single mom struggle to raise children on her own. Lori describes her feelings growing up:

> And then the divorce that my mom went through, I saw her struggle and then I think according to her, she told me that I used to tell her that I didn't want to end up like her like I wanted to do more, and be more, so part of that was I guess going to college and wanting to do more with myself versus struggling with going to work. Because I remember seeing her struggle to get up to go to work and then come home ridiculously tired, then trying to raise kids and manage the house and it's just such a struggle and I didn't want to see myself go through that. So I think that was something that also pushed me to do that.

Sophia faced similar experiences growing up with a single mom and she was motivated to continue her education through her mom's own life experiences:

> I think a lot had to do with like you know, my parents getting separated, so she was a single mom, I think she wanted me to not be a single mom, but to be able to provide for myself and not depend on any man or anything like that.

It was evident from participants' stories, that they were heavily influenced and inspired by their parents' struggles and hard labor, either as migrant farmworkers or single mothers.

The participants all felt pride for their parents' strong work ethic and felt encouraged to work hard in school and in life. When asked what influenced her the most in college, Elizabeth talks about how her parents' sacrifices inspired her to

attend and complete college:

> Another major factor that kept this goal fresh in my mind was my mom and dad; they have always had educational attainment on top of their list for us that is why they moved us to such a small school district at a young age, because they had better schools and smaller classes. It was due to such high property taxes. When I told my mom and dad that year that I wanted to go to college they said they would support me all the way with what they could working 12-hour days. Their hard work kept me motivated to go and finish school, because I would see how much harder they had to work so they could give me a little money.

This hard work ethic was also emphasized in parents' values for a good education. Many participants recalled how parents constantly reinforced their educational goals. Despite language barriers or a lack of high school or college education, or a working knowledge of how the U.S. school system operates, participants' parents continued to counter dominant ideologies that Latino parents don't care about education. Furthermore, participants' parents proved that they valued education and consistently pushed the importance of education by making it a priority in their children's lives. Six participants in particular (Bianca, Elizabeth, Gabriela, Kristina, Lori, and Sophia) were aware at a young age of the importance of education in various ways by family. Their parents all used different strategies to encourage their children to strive for better grades in school. Gabriela's mom emphasized the importance of education over everything else, including family:

> So, my mom was really big about us completing school and stuff and getting further ahead. So, yeah, so she always pushed us to the point where we never went to Mexico in December or visited. We never went on vacations during school time. She was really big about not getting us out of school, and making sure we went to school.

Gabriela's mom also stressed the importance of reading at a young age:

> Well, I thought it was the norm, until I found out it's not very common for people to get a library card at five years old (laughs). She used to work her 12-hour shifts, and you know have her long days, but whenever she had a break, she would walk us, we didn't have a car, we only had one car at the time, she would walk us to the library, that was her free time and a free event for us for the time she could take us, ice cream and library. That was the biggest thing. Whenever I was able to write, that was when I got my first library card, I think it was at five. The same with my sisters, they each got library cards once they were able to write. She read me Spanish books, it was never English books, but that was her big way of pushing us educationally.

Kristina's parents provided a structured routine for homework early on, making education a non-negotiable priority in her and her brother's lives. Kristina remembers:

> It was never an option to not go to college. When I was little, my parents always sat us down, homework time, like as soon as we got home, before we could do anything fun, it was like did you get your homework done, whenever we needed help, they would help us, they really pushed education on us a lot. My parents always pushed me for it. They always wanted me to do better, and just like have a life where I wouldn't have to struggle, growing up and like when I had kids and a family, so it's like it was always on the table for me and my brother, we want you to go to school, we'll help you, we'll pay for you to go to school, they pushed us for it.

The idea of going to college as being preset was repeated in Lori's household by her mother and grandmother in two different ways. Lori recounts:

> I would say a huge motivational factor was my mother. She was really a pusher into like well you are going to go to college, kind of like I was just destined to do. And then I remember my grandmother taking English classes, when I was probably in high school; she was about 70 years old. She would walk to the church to take her English classes, and then come home and I would see her practicing, still trying to learn English, so I think that also kept me thinking about it's important for grandma to educate herself so it's important for me to educate myself as well.

Several of the participants conveyed through their stories that this emphasis towards education made the difference between dropping out of education after high school and continuing on to college. Many of Bianca's and her siblings' friends have not moved

away from their small town. Their friends have either dropped out of school, had children at a young age, and/or continue to work at entry-level jobs without furthering their education. When I asked Bianca why she thought she took a different route and went to college, she answered:

> The support of my parents. Always the emphasis was on education, the importance of education, what you could do to succeed, being bilingual, its high demand, the high expectations they had for us.

The importance of education and learning combined with parental verbal encouragement through affirmations, advocating for their children in school, emotional support, or boasting about accomplishments all contributed to participants' desire to do well in school.

All of the participants mentioned their parents as being main sources of inspiration and motivation to obtain a higher education and more than half of the participants specifically mentioned their moms as the person who was most influential to them in completing a baccalaureate degree. Kristina describes how her parents, particularly her mom, provided much needed emotional support to keep her motivated in college:

> I wanted to make my parents proud, I think, and I wanted to do better for myself. Constantly having my parents' support, like I would call my mom sometimes so stressed out and she would be, "I know you will get it done". It was good having someone to talk to.

Some of the participants' parents showed them the importance of education by advocating for their children in school. Sophia discusses how her mom continually had to go to her school throughout her education when Sophia was placed into ESL (English as a Second Language) classes:

> S: But after, well, my mom put me in preschool for two years instead of one because I didn't know that much English, my first language was Spanish, so she kept me in there longer. When I got older, when I was in elementary school, they were trying to put me in those classes, so my mom went to go talk to them, "No she doesn't need to be in those classes, because she already knows English really well." Because it was for kids who just came from Mexico and really didn't know any English. That was one thing that was, my friend and my mom's friend, both of our moms had to go to the school and actually like argue that we don't need to be in ESL. It kind of was a big issue, you know, because they just automatically think you know, put them in there. I was just like so annoyed, because I know English, that was the only thing.
>
> A: Did you have any of those experiences in middle school and high school?
>
> S: Well, like in high school, yeah, they tried to place you in those classes. Like there was, I know in high school, for most of the classes, they had one classroom for ESL students so they were pretty much there all day except for PE versus us who switched, got different classes and stuff, but yeah, they were trying to put me in there too. My mom was like she doesn't need to go there, you can test her. By that time, I knew full-blown English, so it's been awhile. That was an issue, them trying to put us in ESL classes. I don't need ESL.

Other participants also recall being tracked in elementary school through high school and will be discussed further.

Some participants recognized the social injustices of tracking and resisted these challenges by advocating for themselves or enlisting the assistance of parents to dispute these inequities. Isaura remembers:

> I think, ever since middle school, was when my mother talked to my counselors to tell them I want her to get in honors classes. Someone had told her that those classes would help get her children to college. So, right there it already started the changes, because I was in a regular class then I went to an honor class. Then from middle school to high school, that's what happened, those students already in honors classes, the academic college path, continued on and I was there in honors classes.

This advocacy was undoubtedly important in setting up Isaura for success in high school and also in preparing her for scholarly work in college.

Lori was also fortunate to have her mother's assistance as she was working as an office manager at her community college. The mother's insider status was able to provide Lori with key information about classes and how the college system worked. Lori talks about her early college experiences:

> Looking back I would say it helped a lot to have my mom already a part of the junior college system. She knew how to ask other people, how to get that help. She was able to navigate that system for me in a sense. She would know a teacher and say hey, there's a wait list but you know my daughter is really trying to get in there, can you help her out and I would get in. There were a lot of pros, and if I was on campus and lonely or hungry, I would say, hey mom let's have lunch together, and she would be ok, let's go. It really benefited me in that I could go visit her when I needed somebody to interact with or I needed some kind of support along the way or even just maybe hey, it's nice to see a friendly smile. You know, you get lost and lonely on a college campus when it's your first time there.

Advocacy was also shown in the form of parents' constant praising of accomplishments to other parents. Isaura found this to be highly motivating and affirming whose mom repeatedly boasted about Isaura's educational achievements in middle school and high school. Isaura says:

> My mom would always tell her friends, oh, she's doing really good in school and I am really proud of her, so that motivated me.

After graduating from college, Isaura recalls how her mom would reveal her pride for her accomplishments when talking to friends or clients:

> My mom, who cuts hair now, will be talking to people there and she's like, "I am pretty proud of my daughter, she didn't run away with a boyfriend, she didn't get pregnant, she got her degree already, she's working, I am a pretty happy mom."

Many of the participants' parental emotional support appear to be key in encouraging self-efficacy and determination in their children. When asked what inspired them to be the first in their families to attend college, most participants mentioned their parents first.

Internal Motivation

Each participant also remarked on how they wanted to better themselves as individuals and students. It is not clear how this internal motivation manifested through childhood. Did their parents' emotional support and strong work ethic transcend to their children, increasing their self-esteem and internal drive to succeed in school or could it be attributed to the participants' individual personality traits? What is clear is that each participant embodied perseverance and determination to complete their goal of earning a baccalaureate degree. Most notably Lori consistently advocated for herself in high school.

> L: I remember being a freshman in my English class and we were reading a book and I was just like, not to be, not to say I was smarter than the other kids, but I didn't feel I was being challenged, so I took it upon myself to go talk to my teacher, and say hey, I don't think I am being challenged in this class, is there anyway I could move up and do something else, so she recommended college prep English. I went to talk to my counselor so my freshman year I got switched from general English to college prep English.
>
> A: How did you know how to advocate for yourself? Where did that come from?
>
> L: (laughs) I wasn't really somebody who would stand up and speak for myself, but as a freshman coming in a new school, I knew what I was capable of, sitting in that class with those students, I didn't feel like I belonged there, I just felt I needed more. I don't know exactly where I got the strength to say hey, I don't belong there, but I did (laughs).

Although Lori remarked about her lack of ability to speak up for herself, there were other instances where she advocated for herself in high school. A specific example was in relation to choosing peer groups with her educational goals in mind. Lori recalls:

> I just stayed within my group of friends (laughs). I kind of made sure I knew who I was hanging out with; made sure they weren't involved with what was going on. I was really good at cutting people off if I didn't like what they were a part of or what they were doing. I would say that, "I don't want to hang out with you," I

> would turn my back and do something else. So, I didn't have a problem cutting people off in that sense.

It is evident that Lori was not going to let anything or anyone jeopardize her pursuit of completing high school and attending college. Other participants (Alejandra, Gloria) persevered despite not having complete parental support or encouragement to go to college, which will be introduced later in this chapter in the discussion on barriers Latinas encountered in their educational experiences.

Giving Back

The idea of giving back to family or the community was a common theme that resonated with all of the participants in one way or the other. Isaura and Bianca mentioned being proud that they could be role models for their younger siblings to follow in their footsteps in gaining a collegiate degree. Similarly, Gabriela was able to inform her mom about tracking practices when she realized her younger sister was unfairly placed in ESL classes. Gabriela discusses her role in helping her sister:

> Also, when I was in high school, the same thing was going to happen to my younger sister, she was actually put in second language English, ESL classes. She had been taking English classes since you know, kindergarten, first grade. She can pronounce and write better than I could because she had me to practice with. So, I told my mom, you need to take her out of those classes, so I was the first one to advocate for my sister, to tell my mom I don't think she should be there, she's smarter than that and this is what they did to me when I was there. For me, pushing my mom, she did end up taking my sister out of those classes and putting her in the English class she was supposed to be at.

Sharing information and resources to help others continued to be a common theme throughout the participants' counterstories. This reinforces Yosso's (2005) ideas on familial capital where valuable knowledge is passed on to family members, extended family, or communities to increase individual or collective empowerment.

Some participants also wished to assist their parents in achieving a more comfortable life, such as Bianca and Gloria who felt a collective responsibility to help out their parents financially after completing college. For example, as Bianca became educated through her college classes regarding human and labor rights, this information was then passed on to her parents who began to advocate for themselves. Bianca discusses these issues:

> But now my father prefers to stay out of the field now. He's been in it for over 20 years of his life. Now he's working inside, pretty much, in an egg factory in Delano. My mother is a sorter, a fruit sorter, an almond sorter, so she's also working in a shed. We still consider each other migrants, but my dad has standards, no more working in the fields, it's too hot. It's too much. My mom is still open to anything; however, now she's working inside, in a little shed. They have AC, conditions have changed a lot. Now, they have AC, they can sit down, they don't have to worry about dehydration, health concerns, sun protection, and stuff like that. It's a big change. Through being educated, as we are going to school, and us educating them, it brings about a different view, for them too.

Through their mutual education on larger social issues, Bianca and her parents were able to improve their quality of life through their collective knowledge.

This sense of advocacy was also reflected in dialogues with Lori and Gloria. Lori felt that helping others succeed in education is important. Gloria chose her career in law enforcement to help the families of crime victims from her own community. Elizabeth hopes to give back to her community by becoming a bilingual nurse. Additionally, Gabriela, who majored in Deaf Studies/American Sign Language and is trilingual (American Sign Language, English, Spanish), wishes to assist Latino/a hearing impaired children with community resources and education. Isaura is currently obtaining her teaching credential in bilingual/multicultural education. And Alejandra wishes to assist other Latino/as as a Vocational Counselor.

School Resources

In addition to family and community, the participants recalled certain teachers, school counselors, or programs that facilitated their educational success. Most of their examples were from their high school experiences, which is important to note, since this appears to be a crucial time in development and identity. Influential teachers and helpful counselors during high school were mentioned most often throughout education, reinforcing their vital role in student's lives. Isaura remembers one teacher in elementary school who was responsible for a turning point in her education and future academic goals:

> The only thing I can think of is the teachers were motivational. One of them, at one point in 4th grade, and I still didn't know English that well, and this teacher told my mom, "you need to put her in English classes because you want her to succeed and you want her to go to college, and be on that track." I feel like if I didn't learn English at that early age, then I would have been in regular classes, and wouldn't have succeeded in honor classes.

Participants, Bianca and Isaura specifically mentioned two Latino Spanish language teachers who taught Spanish who inspired them to do better in school. Isaura's teacher motivated her to go to college by sharing personal stories of her own college success. Similarly, Bianca's Spanish teacher encouraged the girls in class to prioritize education over relationships with boys. Two teachers in particular inspired Lori in high school for different reasons:

> There was a math teacher that I had that was really, she was very influential in that she wanted me to sign up to go to a different high school that was more technology based and the high school itself was on a college campus. But it was too much pressure and I didn't want to apply. I didn't want to leave where I was at and start something new. But she really influenced me in thinking farther outside of where I was at motivating me into seeing, ok, well, I could do more, someone actually believes that I can do more and be somewhere else, so that did help. Also, my art teacher was really, she was really passionate. What she did as

> an art professor and then she was really awesome, she spoke to us one on one and made you feel, I know you are here and I know what's going on with you. So, that helps too. Having teachers that kind of just cared a little bit, took the time to say, "oh, how are you doing today" or "thanks for being in class today", or just remembering your name, calling you by name made a big impact as well.

As the above stories signify, the role of caring teachers positively impacts students' lives and educational experiences.

This is evident in Lori's accounts of her longevity in college and how difficult it was for her to sustain motivation in completing a baccalaureate degree. Lori struggled through three community colleges and three state universities to complete her baccalaureate degree. It took 11 years for her to complete her undergraduate degree due to financial reasons, moving to different cities, and dealing with life's responsibilities as an adult living on her own. When I asked her about her college experience at Sacramento State, she described a pivotal moment in her academic journey:

> My experience here was the best experience I had at Cal State out of all three schools, I went to. I forgot to mention Chafee. I did a year at Chafee College, in between Long Beach and San Bernardino. I did some Child Development units while I was there. I was still trying to stay in school and then trying to do stuff. Sac State was awesome. Because the teachers, one teacher, Professor Figueroa, I was enrolled in her class my first semester and she had a strict attendance policy where it was like if you missed three, you were out (laughs). Well, this was my first semester at Sac State in a whole new city, just I was one of those people who really needed to have somebody say, "hey, what's going on, where are you at" and she was able to do that in a way where she didn't know what she was doing but she did that for me. I had missed three absences in her class, and then I got an e-mail from her, oh, maybe it was two absences, and I get an e-mail from her, "hey, I noticed you haven't been in class, you are a really big part of our class, we need you back, just come on back when you are ready to come back, something like that, she just gave me a really supportive e-mail and I was just like, thrown off, set back by this professor that I didn't know that three weeks into the first semester and she's asking me to come back because I am a valuable student to her environment. I said, ok, I'll come back to class. I came back and she was really welcoming. That really solidified my experience here at Sac State and that affirmed that I was in the right place. I just felt like ok, this feels good. People actually want me here, you know, I am getting recognized, I am being noticed, I

> feel like I am a part of something, where I didn't get that at Cal State Long Beach and Cal State San Bernardino, so much. So, it was a little bit easier to navigate even though I was a stranger to the city and a stranger to the school, I felt more comfortable, overwhelming comfort, in the sense of ok, I can do this, I can finish this here now.

As shown, teachers and counselors who take the extra time to give individual attention or support to students can make a life changing impact on students without realizing it.

School intervention and subsequent counseling greatly impacted Alejandra's life in unexpected ways. Alejandra reveals how she was inspired to become a counselor:

> Another thing that inspired me in middle school was going into counseling, because when I was in elementary school, I was sexually abused by an uncle. And at middle school, it was a time when I was mad at everyone. My mom went to clinic and the clinic called the school and they started doing an investigation and I went into counseling for three years. I wanted to be like her. That's why I am doing my Masters in Counseling, but in Vocational Counseling. When I was in eighth grade, I really liked her, she said I could visit her anytime I wanted to, her name is Patti. And she told me that whatever help I needed, she would always support me. There was an exam (Marriage and Family Counseling) that I had to pass, she would be more than happy to help me prepare for that test. I haven't gone to see her yet. I know she has a clinic, and she works for the elementary school across the street, and middle school. She did both. And she would ask me whatever I wanted, if I wanted to paint, to tell her what things I wanted, and she would bring them to me and to talk. And she had little dolls with different faces, depending on how I was feeling, she would let me keep that doll the rest of the day, and I would take it back to her at the end of class or whenever I needed to speak to her, I was allowed to go see her if she did not have another student with her.

Counselors can provide emotional support and caring at crucial times as well as inspire students' career and college going choices.

Other participants, Kristina and Lori expressed how important counselors were in helping them through the college application process by providing them valuable information on what classes to take, SAT preparation, and what colleges to apply to.

Gloria had never thought of attending college until her high school counselor mentioned it:

> A: Were there any other factors that inspired you to go to college besides wanting a better life than your parents?
>
> G: To tell you the truth, I didn't think about college until my counselor brought it up.
>
> A: What year was that?
>
> G: This was when I was a junior in high school, or, yeah, the beginning of my junior year, and that was because I went into a Geometry class, and I didn't like the teacher, I wasn't learning anything and I wasn't doing too good in that class. But it was because it was very unstable, we didn't have an actual teacher, we had a substitute from the beginning of the school year, and we were not learning, we were still on chapter 1 at the end of the first quarter and so, I told my teacher, well, I can't make it to that class, if I am not going to learn anything, because all of the other classes of the same subject were at a higher level, so I told them, and he said, well, you can go to summer school, and you won't be able to go to summer school at the high school, but you can go to a summer class at community college. So, that's what I did, my junior summer, the end of the year, I went to summer school, took a Geometry class and I was surprised, I actually liked it. So, I went back to my counselor and I told him I wanted to take another class. My senior year, I took Italian at the community college, while I was going to school. So, I took off during lunch and went to community college and took that class. With that, I decided to talk to my counselor a little bit more about college, what it would be like, how much it would cost. I was thinking of going to private college, and then, my counselor broke down tuition fees of each school, the UCs and CSUs. Even though I was still confused, I thought it was too much money, so I decided to go to community college.

Encouragement and advice from counselors proved to be beneficial in increasing participants' knowledge and motivation to attend college.

Three students, Isaura, Gabriela, and Alejandra also mentioned participating in both high school programs that encouraged them to go to college and later in collegiate programs, which ensured retention and completion rates. Gabriela, tired of being placed in remedial classes, advocated for herself by enrolling in a challenging dual language

program in high school:

> I actually signed up for a program called Academia de Española, which was the first two years in Spanish, all the classes, and the last two years of high school was in English. The program was designed for students who were coming from like other Latin countries to try to integrate them into high school, that way they could get up to par in their English and also, not fall behind taking classes that were remedial. When I asked my mom to change me into this program, I was excited because I wouldn't be in those classes that I thought were lower, well, I used to call them stupid classes, I was not going to be in those classes, I was going to be in better classes where they were going to teach me stuff. But the only difficulty I had was I never had classes on how to read and write in Spanish, so it was difficult taking Biology in Spanish my freshman year, but at the end, it was rewarding to get through those classes and it was a huge challenge. So, it was something different. My grades did hurt those two years because they were all in Spanish, but it was better than having all A's and not learning nothing. That's how I felt.

Additionally, Gabriela was also exposed to the program MESA (Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement Program when she attended Delta community college and her experiences within this group proved to be transformative. Gabriela explains:

> But MESA, my advisor, Eloisa, she was the one who kind of pushed me that way to go to the medical school part because of the opportunities that jumped in front of me. She was the one who informed me of a program called HCOP, Health Career Opportunity Program; it was a 6-week summer program at Stanford. I had to write a letter, I had to get two letters of recommendation, all this stuff, and my transcripts together. I told her I really don't have the time and it's within two weeks, I had to finish all of this at that time, but she helped me out though. I got accepted, it was 50 students who got accepted, I actually got to stay there for 6 weeks and I got more pushed into trying to finish school because of that. It was a great opportunity because I got to meet different medical students, different people from all over the nation that came to this program, I was one of the few people from the Valley to get in, I was, "Wow, this is great." After that, I went to my first convention, I had never been out of state, so I got to fly to Texas for a convention through MESA, it was a science convention for minorities, mostly Latinos and Native Americans. It was the biggest group of Ph.D. women I had met there, because there were sessions they offered where women got together just to discuss different things going on in society and stuff. There was a lot of women there with higher degrees that I got to listen in to and what they had to say and stuff. It was really interesting to listen to what they had to say. There was a lot of speakers, one from NASA, it was just very really cool to see these people there. It was my first convention so I was like this is really something I would

> come to again. But like I said, I ended up not going to the science field. But after that, when I hear about conventions or workshops, I am always interested in trying to go to it or seeing a way to go to it, because it was such a great opportunity. It opened my horizons basically, especially because like I always say people who grow up in Stockton, live in a bubble. I think there's not enough opportunities brought to students and people who live there. So, they don't see anything further than beyond that bubble. When I got these opportunities, I was like I don't want to stay here, I want to go somewhere else, I want to try something new, I want to do something more than staying in Stockton, just doing something I don't want to do, I want to do something more, do something that I want to do. Like I said, I didn't end up going into the medical field, but I knew there was other possibilities. That was something really big. When I graduated from Delta, I wrote to Eloisa and I told her thank you. I had never had the opportunity to see her after I was done because of my schedule and stuff. I wrote her an e-mail to thank her for everything, I was graduating, and I was transferring to Sac State, all this stuff I wrote to her. But, yeah, there was so many things I was happy about that program that helped me go that way.

College going programs gave participants valuable insights and knowledge about opportunities in higher education and possible future careers.

Some participants, Isaura and Alejandra found practical experiences helpful in inspiring their interest in college and having a major impact on their decision to further their education. Isaura recounts her experience with campus field trips:

> As high school students, they tell you to do good in school, but experiences that show you how you can contribute, like campus field trips really help. You can see different cities; this could be my new home. Those programs, like Upward Bound program, were good.

Alejandra was also exposed to numerous field trips to universities through EOP programs in her middle school and high school. She also visited UC Santa Cruz in elementary school because her third grade teacher had graduated from there and she assigned a field trip for her students and gave them a tour of UC Santa Cruz to explain what college was like for her. Although, it made her think about attending a university, it wasn't until high

school when she seriously began considering it due to the positive influences from her high school migrant education counselor and her EOP outreach high school counselor.

Both of these programs continued to help Alejandra in her transition to Sac State college:

> AS: How did CAMP and/or EOP help you in your transition to Sac State?
>
> A: Well, it was more EOP, for CAMP, it was more like feeling comfortable because all the Mexicans were there, and EOP gave me more like academic advising and support. I had to go visit my EOP counselor, they had computers, they had free printing, they showed us around, and then they gave us small assignments to learn different resources that were around here. And having a learning community helped me a lot, we worked together, we came together from other classes, which was very helpful.

Isaura also found help and a sense of belonging in her college program, CAMP, and credits it for her success at Sac State:

> Freshman year, the program that really helped me a lot, which made it completely smooth was CAMP, because that was my family away from home, like I made new friends, they would provide overnights for us, they would provide field trips for us, they would provide classes with orientation, such as how to succeed in college.

Besides practical advice and resources, many programs such as EOP and CAMP provide the necessary emotional support as well as a sense of belonging and connection to the college campus when students connect with other students who share their own cultural backgrounds and/or experiences.

Peers As Social Capital And Support

Throughout the dialogues with the participants, it became clear that the role of peers was invaluable. Peers provided sources of information in the college going process, they provided emotional support during tough times and/or encouragement to

attend and complete college. Peers also stimulated a connection to others and the educational environment as well. Six participants, Alejandra, Elizabeth, Gloria, Isaura, Lori, and Sophia talked about the importance of friends as motivation in school or in feeling connected to their schools. Sophia felt her friends were a source of motivation to do well in school:

> I didn't have any peers who were obstacles, I think it was mostly motivators, like the friends I hung around were mostly Latinos also, but their parents were very similar to my mom, like my best friend, well she has a mom and dad, but they both were really hard working, but her dad worked in the fields and her mom worked at a school, so her parents were both the same way, like you need to go to college, you need an education, you know provide for herself. That's how all my friends were and all of my friends' families were all in agriculture.

Friends were a source of comfort and created a sense of belonging. For Lori, her group of tight friends provided stability and she made sure her friends stayed out of trouble. Isaura talks about finding her best friend in her senior year of high school:

> So, I had to figure out things by myself and friends would influence me a lot. So, they became a really big influence. Junior year didn't go so well, but senior year, I made a friend, who also felt like she didn't belong and she was funny and outgoing. So, that kind of helped me become a happier person, like I finally have a best friend. So, senior year, we were a clique, us two, and that's how I became, us two became accepted of that honor school society or classroom.

Alejandra was also deeply affected by a pivotal friendship she made in high school:

> Karen and me, we were always together, she wasn't into going outside and doing things, and I was. So, I got her into enjoying outdoors and having fun and she got me into like doing my homework, studying, and actually taking the classes that I needed for college.

When Alejandra was planning on attending a local community college due to parental pressure, it was her friends who encouraged her to dream bigger and apply to universities instead. Alejandra's friend Karen not only provided emotional support, but also gave her practical advice and help in filling out her college applications. Karen encouraged

Alejandra to attend Sacramento State University since she was accepted to the University of California, Davis campus and they would then be living much closer to one another

Similarly, Elizabeth was highly influenced to attend college through hearing her friends in high school talk about applying and going to universities. Elizabeth who grew up in a predominantly white upper class town where everyone was expected to go to college, discusses how this impacted her:

> All of my friends during spring break went to visit universities with their families, while I would question myself why my parents did not take me too. When they came back from spring break junior year of high school we went out to lunch and they were all talking about college and college life, the campus, and classes they sat in. That day I made it a goal that I was going to attend college as well like they were going to do in a year. I had no idea how I was going to get there, because none of my family members had ever attended college; in comparison all of my friends' family members had attended a four-year institution. My goal was that I was going to attend college just like them.

Attending a well-resourced school with affluent peers led to an increased knowledge about post high school opportunities and resources. In Elizabeth's case, as the first person in her family to attend college, this context proved to be invaluable. Sophia also received valuable knowledge from a peer regarding college life:

> I didn't have any older siblings or older cousins, nothing like that, to tell me, "oh, you need to do this, you need to do that." My best friend's sister though, she was the first to go to college and graduate, she would come home on the weekends, she would tell us about her college experiences, it would make us kind of excited, that sounds fun, we have to go here, you can pick your own classes, you know everything just sounded really fun.

This information combined with knowing another Latina who was the first in her family to go to a university was a turning point for Sophia.

Traumatic Experiences

Defining moments also included harrowing events where participants took those negative and painful experiences to gain new perspectives on life. Gloria and Alejandra both experienced traumatic deaths in their families. These negative experiences ultimately redefined their identities and produced new life and career goals in the process. Gloria tells the story of how she changed her major from interior design to criminal justice:

> G: I started going to community college to become, to go into interior design. That was the reason, I really like design, I wanted to become an architect when I was young. After I heard that it would take 8-10 years to become an architect, I got a little scared. I wanted to take some design classes before I went further to actually you know thinking more seriously about becoming an architect. While I was taking those classes, I was called for jury duty. I know, it's kind of odd. But that's actually what led me to criminal justice. I served as a juror for a case that happened in 2003, I was a juror in 2004. It was a pretty big case for Monterey County. It was a road rage homicide case. That's how I ended up changing my major to criminal justice.
>
> A: What was it about the case that inspired you or changed your mind?
>
> G: Well, it kind of goes back, because in 2003, a month before the case I was on, an incident happened in 2003, my cousin was killed in a homicide. And I don't know, at the time, I was very negative about everything, today is his anniversary, and in a way, I kind of feel like things happen for a reason. I went through a lot of trauma, and denial, and you know it was very unexpected. He was a really close cousin. Both my parents are both brothers and sisters to my aunt and my uncle, my mom and my aunt are sisters, and my dad and my uncle are brothers, so it's someone who you grew up with, really close. And when I became a juror, I did tell the judge that I had a cousin who passed away a month after the case I was on happened. And he said it was ok. I guess I kind of pulled it off; it's something I would like to see, like to experience. I ended up being a juror for 5 weeks, and I set school aside and I got incompletes for the classes I was taking that semester. I learned a lot about the motive behind the tragedy. The way I see it is when my cousin passed away, I was like everyone was guilty to me, every person I saw was guilty. In the end, months later, I thought about it, I guess I was more forgiving. I felt like I was the one in my family who forgave. I don't know how to explain it. I feel like the light turned on. That's how I felt. What made me think about

> going into law enforcement or criminal justice; I want to help those who are going through the same thing we went through. Because there's a lot of that in that area now. I would hate for anyone to go through the same thing we did. If I could do anything to help those people, I would like to do it. After that trial, there's a little thing in me that wanted to become a law enforcement officer or to get information about it. I ran into an officer, that was an officer at the high school, and I asked him about the police department and he said how about volunteering. So, that's how I become a volunteer and so, I was a volunteer for a few months.

Unexpected deaths in Alejandra's family were the impetus for her to change her attitude about her life and education. She also changed peer groups to reflect these new changes.

> AS: Earlier you talked about how your peer group changed from your elementary school to high school, can you talk more about that?
>
> A: When I was younger, I lived in some apartments for a long time and I wasn't really into school. And then in middle school, a lot of my friends were kind of like troublemakers, we were mean. But I also was in a car accident that changed my attitude too. My grandma had passed away, my uncle had flipped over on the way to Mexico, I was the one who was less major, so I questioned myself why my uncle and my grandmother had died because they were very nice people and my aunt is not very nice, and my cousin, I kind of took it like, God took people who had already done great here, and he left us because we still need to change, because we were not allowed in heaven, so he's giving us a chance to change, and then maybe, this was an eye opener to see things differently, and change our attitude, to change who we were. I changed my way of dealing with people, I wasn't rude anymore, I respected people, I didn't disagree with different opinions as I used to, I used to always want things to go my way. So, that changed, at that point, I was already in high school.

Between this life changing event and having the support of her best friend Karen as well as EOP and CAMP programs in middle school through college, Alejandra never looked back in her quest to complete a collegiate degree. Although she experienced multiple traumatic experiences growing up, she took those negative painful events to rise above her circumstances and reinvent herself. Her determination and fortitude are remarkable, particularly in light of the lack of parental support to attend college, which will be discussed further in the next research question.

Summary

Looking at the factors that contributed to Latinas' success throughout the educational pipeline, two factors stood out unanimously amongst the participants as being key influences in their academic accomplishments. Each participant mentioned parents as being important role models and vital contributors to their educational success. Parents helped in various ways that were broken down into three sub-themes: 1) having better opportunities for a better life than their parents; 2) parents' emphasis on the importance of education; and 3) parents' verbal encouragement. This parental support may have been translated to participants' internal motivation and determination to overcome obstacles on the pathway to completing an undergraduate degree despite being the first people in their families to do so. These close familial ties were also reflected in many of the participants' responses in the importance of completing a college degree so they could then give back to their families and/or community.

Another motivational factor that all participants talked about were school resources. Some participants recalled influential teachers, counselors, or school programs such as EOP or CAMP that helped them with the college going process. Other themes such as peers and negative life experiences were not significant factors for all of the participants, but these influences were so instrumental to the success of these particular participants, that it is worthy of documenting those stories.

Research Question 2:

What obstacles did Latinas' confront in their educational experiences?

Parents Lack of College Education

All nine participants revealed how important their parents were in achieving

an undergraduate degree; however, most participants also conveyed feelings of frustration with the lack of understanding or knowledge that their parents gave them throughout the college going process. Participants, in most cases, felt emotional support from their parents, but felt a sense of disconnect with their parents regarding educational advice and information. Since all of the participants were the first people in their families to graduate from college, they had to seek this knowledge elsewhere. Participants reported feeling defeated that their parents could not give them tangible practical advice on how to navigate and find resources on how to go to college. Some participants wished that their parents could share in their college experiences or understand their academic struggles. Elizabeth wonders if her college choices and career path would have been different if her parents were college educated:

> I feel that I did not shoot as high because I was scared. For example, if my parents had gone to college I would probably have moved farther for college (UCLA) and would of majored in something like engineering or medicine. I feel like if my parents would have attended college they would have oriented me as to what to expect in college and what my experience would be; therefore, my goal would have been higher. They would have helped me prep myself since high school, because they would of known that high school is a needed foundation for college. But since, I was the first one to go and experience college by myself without anyone telling me what it was going to be like it was a lot of trial and error.

This lack of connection between parents' life experiences and participants' college struggles is revealed in the following story. Gloria's shares her feelings about her mothers' reaction to her college experiences:

> At the beginning she was very confused, because she thought I was going to go the same route as my brothers and sisters, and I would try to explain to her that later on, you know, once I would get the education, than it would be easier to help them. So, she didn't really agree with me, but I still did it anyway. Once I enrolled in school, she saw me stressed, and she told me, we are happy you graduated, you did really good in high school, and we are not expecting you to

> you know continue on, so if you choose to stop going to college, it's ok with us, (laughs), she encouraged me in that way, but I still continued.

This was obviously difficult for parents who had not experienced college themselves, so participants felt disconnected from their parents. It also illuminates the complexities of participant's experiences and how parents can inspire motivation to attend college yet at the same time be a source of frustration for the participants. Bianca also shares her rocky transition to a college campus:

> Other barriers (pause), things like some parents are so helpful with their kids and schooling. However, our parents don't know much. You know, they are not educated, they don't know what resources there are for college, you see parents coming in with their children and paperwork, and we are just alone, stranded there, they are not willing to come, because they don't know English, so that was something I struggled with, coming to Sac State on my own, figuring out resources on my own. You just have to throw yourself in there and do what you have to do. Other than that, they have always been very supportive, what's best for you, think about the future, how would that benefit you.

Kristina faced this same barrier and described it in a different way. Her parents were extremely supportive of her pursuit of higher education; however, they could not really understand what she was going through since they had never been in her shoes. We explored the meaning of this in our dialogue:

> AS: Did you encounter any barriers in college?
>
> K: I think just like, my mom understood, my parents understood what I was going through was hard, but they couldn't really relate to me. My brother also started going to Cal Poly, so he could. But my parents, it was hard, because they knew it was hard, and they knew everything was hard, but they couldn't relate to what was I going through.
>
> AS: What do you mean by relate?
>
> K: Like staying up until 2 or 3 in the morning cramming for exams or writing papers and stuff. Obviously, I would tell my mom that I was up until 3 in the morning today writing this paper and she would be like, "Oh, gosh that's crazy"

> like they couldn't really, they never went through that, it was hard to explain to me them what it was like.

Similarly, Gloria shares an experience of her families' initial lack of enthusiasm when hearing the news of her completion of an Associates of Arts Degree:

> Well, when I received my Associates, well, I had talked to my advisor one day, she said "Oh, you know you are ready for your degree, you already completed your general ed", and I was like, "Oh my god, I was so excited". I was so excited, so anxious to go home and tell my sister "Oh I got my Associates Degree"; I didn't have a phone at the time. I got home and my mom comes home and she's like, "How's school"? Oh, it's good, guess what, I got my Associates Degree! I tried to explain to her what an associates degree is. She goes, "Oh that's good". I said, "You're not more than happy or you are not as happy as me." And she didn't really understand what it meant to me. My sister comes home and you know, I said, "Guess what, I got my Associates Degree." She's like, "Oh, really, everybody has one." I was like, "Oh" in disappointment. She's like, "Congratulations". I got the wrong response from both of my parents and my sister, so I didn't tell my other sister or my brothers, because I thought it wasn't a big deal. Later on that week I went to work and there's these two customers that used to go to the ice cream place I worked at, they asked me, these two ladies, they asked me how school was going, they asked me how much longer it would take for me to get a degree, I told them I am ready for it. They were excited and congratulated me. I was so confused because their responses, their reaction was much different from my sisters and my moms. So, they took off, and before I got off work, they stopped by and gave me a card, and I thought, oh that's so sweet and I opened it up and it had $50 in it! Oh my god, they gave me $50! So for me, wow, it does mean something. So, I went back home and I said, "Look Mom, the twins gave me this!" She said, "Really, for what?" I said, "For my Associates". She didn't say anything. So, my sister comes home and I told her, "Look the twins gave me this", so my sister said, "Wow, that's really nice". My mom and her talked about you know me getting my Associates, and they felt bad, that they didn't think it was a big deal or that they didn't understand what exactly it was. So, we ended up going to dinner like the next day to celebrate. That happened and I started applying to universities.

Gloria's story is a poignant one that emphasizes immigrant parents' lack of knowledge about the college system. It is not that her family didn't care about Gloria's education, they just didn't realize the ramifications of different degree titles and how an Associates Degree is a stepping-stone to a baccalaureate degree.

Alejandra's family also had mixed reactions towards her goal of completing an undergraduate degree. Her mother supported Alejandra in her educational goals; whereas, her father criticized her choice to attend college. Alejandra told her dad that she wanted to apply to a university and she reveals his negative response:

> I had gone to my dad and he had said no, it was too expensive and he said I was crazy. He said I wasn't going to get a loan to go and that I was crazy and that I needed to stay home, and if I wanted to go somewhere I was going to community college.

Despite her dad's negative reaction, Alejandra continued to persevere in school due to her mom's support as well as peer and counselor encouragement.

Fitting In With Peers

A few participants discussed how peers influenced their decision to go to college, which was explored in the previous research question, but some participants also saw peers or a lack of friendships causing a barrier for them in education. Isaura recounts her high school experiences as she transitioned to a new school:

> But what became difficult was the whole high school cliques. Because even though since middle school, two of my really good friends moved, and I was placed in the honors classroom and it was not easy to make friends. Moving on from middle school to high school, I would hang around with different girls who were part of those honor classes, but it wasn't the same, they already had their cliques, so I felt like I didn't belong. And then I couldn't go back to hanging out with the other students in regular classes because it didn't feel right either. So, I felt like I was kind of in the middle, because I wasn't part of the clique with the honors students and in my other classes, like the students were more I guess, Mexican. I felt like that even though I am Mexican and I know how to talk Spanish, the students in regular classes were newcomers, the ones in English learners classes, and those in regular classes that didn't have like the title of being an honors students or being in academics. Then there were the students in honor classes, and we are the ones succeeding, overachievers, so then I was like in the middle, that I didn't belong with anybody. Even though some people from those cliques were really nice and they befriended me, there were other people that were part of their cliques, they would be, "Oh, why are you talking to her?" So, I felt like I was really put down. Sophomore and freshman year I did really good, but

> junior year that's when I didn't pass two or three of my classes that were really important, like math and chemistry, I think those two classes. I just went through a phase like I didn't care.

Although Isaura expressed feelings of alienation in high school, a busy social life in college caused an obstacle in her education for other reasons. The lure of parties, joining a sorority, and developing new friendships made it difficult to balance an academic load with the social expectations she faced.

According to the dialogues, fitting in and making friends was a common thread in their stories. In the following examples, these issues are compounded by race and class issues, and are further complicated by students who are the first in their families to attend college and trying to navigate a complex college system. Gloria and Alejandra both talked about being lonely in college and how they wanted to call home all the time. Alejandra actually encountered some trouble by her parents for talking on the phone too much:

> I got my phone taken away because I was used to having someone always with me, and when I was by myself, waiting for the bus, I would call people to be always on the phone.

The transition to college proved to be difficult for many of the participants who went away to college right after high school since they were younger and had to learn so many things all at once. Participants had to learn how to navigate their college campus, handle college coursework, find campus resources, live on their own for the first time, manage their money, juggle work responsibilities, and learn how to get around in a new city.

Financial Hardships

Financial barriers were mentioned by all of the participants as one of the most difficult obstacles during their college years. Most of the participants relied on financial

aid and school loans to fund their baccalaureate degrees. When asked about barriers in college, many participants mentioned financial hardships and the constant worry of how to pay for classes, books, and living expenses. Bianca recalls:

> Yes, there were multiple barriers. First of all, financially, we didn't have the support of my parents. They barely made it between both of them. My mom was getting paid $8 an hour until this day, my father was $9 an hour. So, having six kids, having rent, utilities, there's no way they could help us pay rent here. I did see a lot of my friends around me, where they come to school, their parents still pay everything for them, and that wasn't my option, I had to work, I had to find options that would better myself. We have a lot of pride. Mexicans have a lot of pride where we know how they are struggling, there's no way we could ask our parents to spare $20, $100, because we know they are struggling and they need that extra money somehow. So, obviously, you get a credit card, you just charge for it now, pay for it later. So, financially, there were multiple barriers, however, you just have to learn to save and find ways to pay off the bills.

Similarly, Lori recounts how she experienced multiple financial hardships in college:

> I was on financial aid the entire time, so by the time I got to my senior year, financial aid was telling me I was tapped out and they weren't going to provide me any more money. I freaked. I was like this is my last year, you can't cut me off, is there something else I can do about that. So, I called my mom, she was like I can't help. Well, I know my grandparents have, there's this hush hush money somewhere, so I called my grandma and grandma, I need help, can you help me out. She asked how much I needed. I said $2000. But she let me have it. So she was able to provide me with that money to finish my last year of school. And then by the end of that year, financial aid was like oh guess what, we can give you that money. Luckily my grandmother was able to provide me with that income to make it possible.

Many of the participants who encountered financial hardships also took longer to complete their degrees as they faced economic setbacks related to their living arrangements and life responsibilities, and they were sometimes forced to take fewer classes each semester. Gabriela almost discontinued her college education when she

faced an unexpected divorce in her family and then was needed to help her mom and younger sisters with living expenses. Gabriela explains:

> Like I said my parents were separating during my last high school year. It was awkward the way their system, how they filed for divorce. They had divorced when I was, I guess, in high school and I didn't know about it. They kept it hush hush from us but they lived together still. I didn't know about this until my mom decided to move out of the house after I graduated. That was the first year that I decided to go to school. That year I decided to go to school, she decided to find a place to live and all of that stuff. My situation changed because my thought process was I thought I could live at home, I won't have to spend money on rent, or spend money on this, I could just dedicate myself on school, you know, I had my mind process on this was what I was going to do, I was going to finish in this long, I won't take longer than this, you know, I had a bunch of goals set up, but after my parents split up, and the split was not pretty, my money that I was saving up for my car and all that stuff, went to our down payment for our first apartment to move out. So, it was kind of like, it was all, it was all bitter at the time. My first semester was great because with my financial aid money I was able to buy my first computer, my first laptop with Internet, because I never had Internet until then. And so, that was really big for me, I was able to write my papers and do everything there. I was taking a bus for school and work, so I was like, oh, I can save my money, my work money and financial aid to buy a car, that way I can go to school and work, and I don't have to leave three hours before to go to school to get the bus, but because of the situation, my plans had changed. So, I had to continue taking the bus a little longer and I had to cut my classes shorter, like instead of taking 15 units, I had to go to 9 units, or you know the smallest I could take to work more hours to help my mom with rent or with food or something, anything, because I had my two younger sisters also. That's the thing, I never moved out because my mom always needed my help. And it was difficult, just like any home that is low-income, it was my mom and I, my younger sisters, one of my sisters had a baby, so we had 5 people living in a one bedroom apartment. That was a difficult time.

Participants' stories revealed their financial struggles and stress in college. Furthermore, some participants had instances where they were in danger of dropping out or taking a much longer time to complete their undergraduate degrees due to the financial burden of attending a university.

Lack of Information/Tracking

In addition to financial worries, many participants revealed their frustrations about their lack of navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) regarding the college going process. Since the participants were the first in their families to go to college, they lacked vital information on how to get there and how to navigate all of the systems to attend a university. College track classes, the importance of taking the PSAT and SAT, the college application process, how to write a personal statement, and filling out financial aid paperwork all eluded many of the participants. Gabriela talks about her confusion in figuring out how to go to college:

> Besides my teachers, I never really met someone who had a higher education. No one in my family had a higher education. My cousin was going to junior college, but it was an off and on classes type of thing, I didn't have anybody to really push me to go to college, besides my mom and teachers telling me, "Hey you need to go to college". But I didn't know about the process, they would talk to me about SAT's that went over my head. I took the PSAT, but I didn't know what was the high score, what was the low score, I didn't know I had to take the real one, because the PSAT was a program I got into and I was sponsored to go take the PSAT, but I didn't know I had to pay for the SAT, so that went out the window. You are told to do it, but not explained on exactly how much it impacts you. There were a lot of students that I knew or hung out with who took honors classes and they understood the whole meaning of taking these classes, but they never explained it to me, they just thought I understood when they talked to me about it, and I was like I had no clue!

This confusion led to some participants not applying to certain universities with more requirements such as SAT scores and personal statements in the admissions process and other participants decided to attend community college because it was less confusing.

In hindsight and after gaining a better understanding of race and class marginalization, some participants realized they had been tracked throughout the educational pipeline. When asked about the obstacles they faced in elementary and

middle school, Elizabeth, Gabriela, Isaura, Lori, and Sophia, all talked about being tracked in lower classes. The participants all reacted in different ways when they came to the realization that they had been placed in a lower track or in an English as a Second Language program. Lori advocated for herself and talked to her school counselor to change to a higher reading class, while Sophia enlisted the help of her mom in getting removed from ESL classes. Other participants such as Gabriela knew she was in the wrong class, but she was not sure how to remedy the situation. Here, she explains her dilemma:

> In middle school, I realized that I guess that there was a process on how they grade you at what level English you are in and I had to take what's underneath the English I was supposed to take. So, that was really hard for me because I am used to taking, like, being challenged and stuff, and I felt like I was put in the lowest class. I was acing everything and I was not bumped up because the teachers didn't want to get rid of me because I was a good student at the same time. I was always put in those lowest classes even though I was getting A's and not being challenged enough. I saw my friends who were in honors classes or something like that, like a different program, I think it's the IB program and they were telling about the stuff that we do, I was like, "I want to do that stuff, why am I not in that program, why am I in this program?" All of the kids who were in my classes, like Language Arts or Math, were the kids who were always getting suspended or getting in trouble, I mean, I was the one who they would want to copy off of because I always got the right answers. So, it was kind of difficult for me to be in those classes, I knew I could do better, but I didn't know how to ask or how to get it changed. My parents, my mom especially, she was the one who went to school stuff, she didn't know how to ask for that stuff, so it was very difficult for me because I knew I could do better.

Although Gabriela realized this disparity in middle school, Elizabeth didn't fully recognize her own experiences of tracking throughout the educational pipeline until she was a college student. In the following story, Elizabeth reveals her anger in discussing having been tracked:

> The only thing that I could think of that placed obstacles in my way in both elementary and middle school is that I was not challenged enough. I feel like they

> kept me below average and I know that I was capable of much more. They always had me in the remedial classes from elementary all the way up to high school. When I think about this it makes me angry because now that I see how far I have gotten I can only wonder how much further I would have gone if I had been challenged like some of my peers were. Oh in high school I had the most obstacles when I think about it I can't believe that I have gotten this far and overcame them all. In high school being a minority and being tracked was the worst. I did not know I was tracked until I learned about this in one of my classes at CSUS. It made me so angry when I realized as a college student that I was tracked the whole four years in high school I thought to myself how was I suppose to attend college when I was not placed in college prep courses like my friends that were not Mexican were; how was I going to apply to a four-year institution with only earth science and not biology? I had the same people in my classes, year after year.

Summary

The complexities of participants' educational experiences are exemplified in these last two sections. Parents and peers were simultaneously seen as sources of inspiration, yet also as sources of disappointment. The lack of parental knowledge and advice on how to get through college caused the participants some frustration. At times, participants felt that their parents just didn't understand what they were going through in college. This need for connection is repeated when the participants talked about establishing relationships with their peers. At different points throughout the educational pipeline, participants encountered some distress in not fitting in or belonging in a particular school and this caused some hiccups in their journey. Ultimately, parents' emotional support and encouragement led participants to continue with their educational goals despite all of these obstacles.

Research Question 3

How did gender, race, and class issues impact their education?

Traditional Gender Roles In The Home

Most of the participants recounted stories and examples of traditional gender roles in the home. Often times, participants' mothers embodied these same domestic values within the home. Parental expectations encouraged daughters to stay close to home, sought their help with siblings and housework, and parents' placed a high value on marriage and children for their daughters. Gloria remembers:

> Throughout when we were little to when we grew up to high school, even today, my sisters and I would always be the ones cleaning. They had us cleaning at the house, we would get home and we start cleaning, my brothers would be outside playing and we'd be inside. And then somehow my sisters and I would sneak out and we'd go play with our brothers and their friends. The next thing you know, my mom would realize it and call us back in. That was pretty much from elementary to middle school, by high school, you know she told us we had to start acting like ladies, because ladies stayed at home and we couldn't go outside to play. There were a few times, when I would go play with my brothers, play basketball or something outside, but this is probably when my parents were at work. So, in high school, also, we had to cook for her, make sure we had beans on the stove, if they weren't in the fridge, they had to be on the stove, and just the more basic dishes that my mom taught us.

Many of the participants viewed this unequal division of labor in the home as unfair. And some participants empathized with their mothers who had to work physically demanding jobs and then come home to complete their domestic roles at home. Alejandra remembers:

> Because my mom, I would see my mom working long hours, she has to sleep, she wakes up and has to cook something, and then she has to try and clean as much as she can, and then she has to get ready for work. And then on her days off, what does she have to do, laundry, grocery shopping, and cleaning the entire house, like completely, where is her resting time?

She recalls being enlightened about the disparity in these gender roles increasingly later in her life, especially after she moves away from home to attend college:

> And for me, I kind of saw it like this is a way for me to get away and do something for myself, because if I stay here, it's going to be the same thing, "Alejandra do this, Alejandra, do that, Alejandra, make tortillas for your brothers,

> Alejandra, serve your brothers, Alejandra, wash the dishes, like there was a lot of expectations for me, gender role expectations. I would go home every weekend for the first year in college, and my brother would tell me he missed me because there was nobody home to clean. And the house was a mess and I felt bad. Because they (brothers) don't do anything, they are used to my mom and me doing everything. So, he told me that he missed me because there was nobody to iron his clothes, wash his stuff, like his car, his shoes, because I used to do that for him.

As Alejandra became increasingly incensed over the inequities of household chores in her family, her defiance slowly started changing her brothers' behaviors, while also creating more tension with her father:

> When I came to college and I would go visit, I would start bossing him around, "pick up your plate". And they (brothers) would tell me "Who are you to tell me what to do?" And I would tell them, you guys are here, it's sad, look at my mom, she's working hard, and you don't do anything. Yeah, you guys work too but your job is as hard as her job. And they would tell me to shut up. Through time, they started to change. Like now, when I am there, if I am in the house, they will pick up their plate. If my mom's there, and I am not there, they won't do it. I told my mom you need to tell them, because you don't tell them, you told me to do things, and look at them now. I don't know if they are afraid of me or because they know I am going to tell them something. They know if I am going to clean, I don't want them around because it's very uncomfortable to see them just sitting down and me having to clean around them, it just gets me really mad. My brothers and my nephew like, I was always have them do stuff. I asked my nephew if he wants to help wash dishes. He's barely three years old. And he likes doing it. I told my mom we need to start at a young age, people need to start doing it. Now, my mom tells my brother to do it. Sometimes, my dad says, school has taught you how to talk back. And I said, yes, it's not talking back, it's defending myself. He just got mad. He doesn't understand, I am not even going to try. I had a big discussion with my dad too because one time, he whistled at me. I ignored him and he whistled again. My mom told me your dad is calling you, answer him. I said no, I have a name! And then my dad said, "Alejandra, I am talking to you!" He wanted a milkshake. My mom told me like, give him a milkshake. I said, no, why do I have to make him a milkshake. He comes back like nothing happened. My mom said, make him a milkshake, she was really mad. I ended up doing it. And I put it on the table, " It's there". My mom tells me to take it to him because he was on the couch. I said, no, I already made it, he said make it, not take it to him. So, she made me go take it to him. I did it, but I was mad.

As Alejandra has matured and grown in self-confidence as a young woman, this has

had lasting influences on her mother who has separated from Alejandra's father and her brothers who are now doing more around the house as well as the encouragement to create more equitable relationships for her nephew by expecting him to learn how to do household chores.

Other gender role expectations included the notion of daughters staying close to home, whether as adults or children. Gloria remembers being bothered by her brothers' opportunities for independence in childhood:

> My mom thought that because we are girls, we are supposed to stay at home. My brothers had a lot of occasions where they got to go roller blading, roller-skating in middle school that was a big deal. And even after that, they always hung out with their friends, if they didn't hang out with their friends, their friends would come over. Growing up, I remember I was embarrassed to bring friends to the house because my mom would tell us, even though we had visitors, she'd have us clean and we couldn't play or if they were there too long, she would get upset at us. She wouldn't say a lot while they were there, but after my friend would take off, she would say, she (friend) should be at her house, she shouldn't be here. We were embarrassed to bring friends over.

Although some of the participants commented on inequities in gender roles, none of the participants considered it to be a barrier in their educational goals.

Many participants eluded to other gender role expectations such as parents' expectations to pick a college close to home, which some participants agreed to and others wanted to move a good distance away to gain more independence and freedom. Gloria, who did attend a community college close to home, made her decision based on financial reasons as well as family influences. She discusses her decision here:

> G: I was thinking of going to private college, and then, my counselor broke down tuition fees of each school, the UCs and CSUs. Even though I was still confused, I thought it was too much money, so I decided to go to community college, especially too, because my mom didn't want me to move away.
>
> AS: Why didn't she want you to move away?

G: Umm, it's traditional to live close to home.

AS: Is that true for sons and daughters in your family?

G: It's more for daughters, than my brothers, boys.

Additionally, Gloria discusses how she was influenced by religion and how her confirmation impacted her future gender identity:

> When I was in high school, I was going to catechism, for my confirmation, and my teacher at Catechism School, she told my mom she wanted me to be the Virgin Mary on December 12. She told my mom before she told me. So my mom made me play the Virgin Mary role for that day. I think back and I feel like that's led me to do the things I've done, you know for my personal choice, but at the same time, I feel like I have to be the perfect girl, I don't know if you heard of the word, marianismo, marianismo is where the female is expected, you have heard of machismo, marianismo is the opposite for the female, the female is portrayed to be the most perfect, more like a saint, a virgin, it comes from the word Maria Guadalupe, the saint. So, ever since I played that role, you know, I've been pressured to be the perfect daughter, be the perfect person, I guess. In regards to you know my sex like, to just everything, I have to play the role of the perfect female in Mexican culture. I think still today, it's still big, even though it's been years, but it still kind of haunts me.

Gloria is now able to reflect on these past experiences and possibly change her views on traditional gender roles. It may have not been possible without higher education as Gloria says that she had never heard the term marianismo until she learned about it in a college class. This enlightenment caused her to analyze and question how gender roles impact her role in society.

Participants were highly influenced to conform to traditional gender role expectations from parents; however, some participants consciously rejected those ideals and developed more equitable relationships in college and beyond. Alejandra changed her role within the family and defied sex-role stereotypes. Both Elizabeth and Gabriela

proclaimed that their parents were modern and liberal in their ideas of gender roles. Gabriela gives an example of how her mom defied traditional gender role stereotyping:

> My mom, for her generation and her age, I would say she's very open-minded (laughs), a very open-minded Latina! For example, one situation, Nintendo came up, when I was growing up, and my dad's thinking was that Nintendo was for boys, not for girls, we were all young too, my sisters and I. My mom went over his head and bought the Nintendo for us and said, "They are going to learn!" (laughs) So, the way she approached things like that, my dad tried to put those types of sex roles in our lives, but our mom kind of squashed them (laughs), depending on the situation.

Furthermore, Lori and Sophia grew into independent, college educated women in an effort to not fall into their mothers' shoes of divorced single moms struggling to make ends meet. And of course all of the participants were courageous in their abilities to overcome societal gender role expectations and become not only the first people in their families to graduate with an undergraduate degree, but the first females to do so.

Racist Experiences in School and Cultural Adjustments

Many participants did not consider race or racial issues as obstacles to their success in education, yet as apparent in the following stories, many of the participants experienced racism. Only one participant, Gloria, recalled a racist encounter with a teacher, which will be introduced later in this section. Two participants (Elizabeth, Sophia) had prejudicial experiences with school counselors. Participants discussed issues of peers and race, stemming from their encounters of gangs and racial violence (Gabriela, Lori), or being surprised by the depths of diversity in college at Sacramento State and not being used to it. Kristina who grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood and Alejandra, who came from a small community with mostly Hispanics, were equally suffering from a culture shock in moving to Sacramento. Sophia also suffered from a

cultural adjustment when she moved from a town that was comprised of mostly Latino/as and whites to a community college in Sacramento, where the campus is ethnically diverse.

Two participants mentioned that they had a hard time adjusting to Sacramento State in majors where they were the only minorities in their upper division classes. Gabriela remembers her first day:

> My major is in Deaf Studies/American Sign Language. So, when I walked in there, I noticed there was no person in there that had darker skin than I did. I was the darkest person there. To me, it was a little bit hard, because I was always coming from schools that were very diverse. And I think, on the first day of class, I signed up for, I know it was an Ethnic Studies class, I cannot remember the name right now. But the first class I took at Sac State was that for the first week and then I went to my actual major class and I was like, "Wow, this is a totally different turnaround, very different!" But then again, I didn't take any general education classes here at Sac State, so it may be different, because of my major, not general Ed. That was hard for me at first.

Similarly, Sophia discovered she was one of the few Latino/as in her English major:

> S: It's funny because in my classes as well, I was talking to one of my girlfriends, I am probably the only Mexican in the classes, everyone else is Caucasian.
>
> A: How was that?
>
> S: I have gotten used to it now. But my first semester, I was just like, really, there's no other Latino/as, English isn't the most exciting subject but I was surprised that there weren't any others. Then I know, in one of my classes, I did have a Latino guy in there, I was like I was surprised to find a guy, a Latino, in an English class and he was an English major as well. But for the majority of time, it was weird at first; it's kind of hard to relate to their experiences and your experiences because they are of a different race or ethnicity. After awhile, I actually became good friends with a girl in my class, she was East Indian, it was very similar, in all the classes, she really didn't have anyone who was East Indian in there, so I think that's what made us hang out more.

Sophia found a friend in those classes who could relate to her outsider status and many participants in this study found comfort with their peers who could identify with

their life and cultural experiences.

Racial identity and fitting in with peers was a common theme for the participants. Gabriela talks about how a change in schools during third grade gave her the opportunity to be with more students who she identified with:

> I did notice that when I moved to a different school when I was in third grade, and from then on, I continued going there, it was the norm for that part of Stockton, it was more Latino/a and Black, more population of those two cultures, ethnicities. It was very different, because I got to meet more kids who understood the foods I ate, the culture; they spoke the two same languages I knew. When I told them something about my parents, they understood what I was talking about. So that was a little different when I got to second to third grade, "So there are people who understand me." But other than that, I didn't really realize it until I went to a different area, "Oh, there is people that understand what I am talking about".

Where Gabriela felt more comfortable with peers who shared her own cultural background, Kristina had a different experience with race growing up in a small town where there were few Latino/as living there:

AS: How was race a factor in your educational experiences?

> K: Honestly, coming to college, it was like oh my gosh, there was so many different races, and like, growing up in Redding, it was mainly dominant white, and so, there was a few Hispanics, but I never really fit in with them because they were the full Hispanics that spoke Spanish, so I was seen as an outcast to them. So, mainly white kids, I hung out with the white kids because I didn't associate with the Mexicans and they saw me as an outcast.
>
> AS: How do you think that impacted you?
>
> K: I don't think there was any negative impact. Although, it would have been nice to just, get more culture, if Redding was more culturized, then I would have been used to it, compared to coming here and just being thrown in the classroom that has like every single race, and I wasn't used to that. It was just hard for me, and here there's some kids don't or hardly speak English, to me, that was really strange. Or going to the store, you see people who barely speak English at all or don't even speak English, I wasn't used to that at all.

As Kristina discusses her desire to gain more culture, Alejandra faced the opposite

issue at her own high school where she encountered discrimination within her own race:

> And my friend Karen and I were loners. We were the new girls at the school. They would call us wetbacks and then, they would say, "It's time to go back to your country." They would put me down sometimes.

These experiences were especially difficult for Alejandra who lived and went to elementary and middle school in a predominantly Hispanic community. Other participants, such as Gloria, also spoke about these changing cultural transitions throughout her educational experiences:

> AS: What were some of the racial barriers you faced in education?
>
> G: It's a tough question, because I felt like I overcame a lot of barriers in middle school. Because my middle school was pretty much a lot of minorities, a little bit of everything, just like everybody in society. Everyone in Seaside went to that school. But I know in middle school, it was a little more different, there was a school in Monterey, and 1 out of 4 students of that high school were Italian, so there was a lot of Italian descent students. So for me, it was a big culture shock, I guess, just because I had never been in a middle school, or any school, where there was so many Caucasian looking people. And so, I became one of the minorities there. I look back and I think there's a lot of, not discrimination, well, prejudiced thoughts.
>
> AS: Whom did you get those prejudicial thoughts from?
>
> G: Teachers and peers also.
>
> AS: What are some examples?
>
> G: There's a lot of racial issues between Caucasians and Mexicans. We were not that many Mexicans and I had friends, diverse friends, and I remember I was in one class, one of the exercises that the teacher had was she would give us points for our characteristics on how we looked. And you know she would say you could have a total of, maximum points was like 4 or 5 points, based on 1-5. People with blue eyes had like 5 points, and people with brown eyes had 3 points, people with blond hair had 4 points, and you know it just went on. And at the end, you would calculate your points. And it was just an exercise, to her, it was a fun exercise. It actually was a leadership class.

AS: What do you think her aim was for that assignment?

G: Honestly, I can't recall exactly what was the purpose was. She was Italian. But yeah, I don't remember what the purpose of the exercise, but I do remember having the least amount of points out of everyone else, I was the only Mexican there.

Despite Gloria's negative experience with this one teacher, the remaining participants had only positive memories of their teachers.

Two participants, Elizabeth and Sophia, encountered counselors who showed bias in the way they treated Latino/a students compared to white students. Sophia talks about how her counselor consistently pushed her and other Latino/a classmates to attend community college, rather than a university:

> The academic counselor was the one in charge of putting people in ESL and everything like that. My friends and I kind of joke around because you go in and talk to her about college or going somewhere else, she would always tell us, "Go to Yuba College, go to Yuba College." Like she would always say that, so we were like, why does she always say Yuba College, I don't know if it was just like she doesn't think we could do any better, she would never say why don't you apply to Sac State or Chico State or anywhere else, she would always push community college on us. That kind of bothered us, we can do better than community college, not that it's a bad thing you know, but you can tell us to apply for something better. That I could tell, I was kind of annoyed.

Elizabeth also remembers bias in her academic counselor:

> The last obstacle I faced in high school was my counselor had minimal contact with me during my four years in high school. I remember my friends would have meetings with her all the time and their parents would attend most of the meetings as well, while I only saw her meeting with the Mexican kids once in a while. Senior year she meets with the white kids to help them apply for colleges and they meet on a regular basis. In comparison to me I only me with her once so she could give me a junior college brochure. She held workshops in English and never thought to give one in Spanish for Mexican senior parents about college.

To this day, she wonders how her high school and college experiences could have been different, if she would have struggled less with more resources and people to support her.

She also thinks about the other Latino/a students who are still facing those same issues and worries that they will fall through the cracks in the educational pipeline.

Economic Obstacles and Educational Stability

Class appeared to be a more salient issue for the participants who all reported life events or problems that effected them financially throughout their educational journeys. All of the participants talked about the lack of money in their families and how this reality deterred them from attending a university, except for Kristina who came from a middle class background. She says:

> My parents paid for me to go to school. I never had to pay. I worked when I first came here. I had a job at Anchor Blue. And then I decided to quit to focus on school more, so I took two years off. And my parents helped me out like majorally, like those two years, supported me, for them it was never worry about the money, it was like I want you to finish school, we'll take care of the rest, you just finish school.

In contrast, Lori's collegiate experiences show the ways that she feels like an outcast due to her own socioeconomic status:

> Long Beach is a more affluent area than what I was accustomed to. So, I think part of it also made me feel like, "I don't see brown kids, where all the Spanish speakers, where are all the poor kids, where's the brown bag lunches?" I didn't see any of that! I didn't really feel attached to the school. I think that really effected the entire year.

Although Alejandra relied on financial aid to fund her higher education, her family came to her rescue when she needed it:

> Because there was a point where I didn't qualify for financial aid because my dad was working too much. And then my brother had given me his car, and at that time, he was riding a motorcycle, because I was followed by a homeless person because I didn't give him money. And at that time, it was raining and I would go grocery shopping with my backpack, so I got sick and I was scared. My brother said he didn't want me to go through that again, so he gave me his car. He paid for insurance, I didn't have to worry about payments, and they (brothers) do all the mechanical work on it. That was very supportive of them.

Additionally, Alejandra's family stepped in to help her when she didn't pass two classes in college by emphasizing education as her main priority. She says:

> I didn't pass two classes and I got in trouble with my brothers and my mom. Because they said that I was here and the school was very expensive, because I had a loan, and my career should be school.

Her brother's actions, without verbalizing it, made it clear that Alejandra and her education was important and that it should be a priority over everything else.

Like Alejandra, the remaining participants were also dependent on financial aid in order to attend and complete college. Additionally, many participants researched the cost of living in the campus cities and this became an important factor in choosing where they would go to college. Most of the participants, besides Kristina's' family, came from lower socioeconomic communities where families struggled to make ends meet. Gloria was the only participant who did not utilize financial aid and similar to the other participants, had to take into account the cost of living of different cities before making a decision on which college to attend:

> I applied to, actually only this one. It was either Sac State or San Jose and I looked at the housing in San Jose and it was really expensive. I knew I wasn't going to be able to afford that. Throughout my college and high school, I was working two jobs, so I had saved money to continue on to school, specifically for school, not for anything else. That's another thing, I paid for my tuition without financial aid throughout my whole college. My parents didn't help me at all. I had some money saved; I thought I could pay rent and school tuition. I saw Sacramento as cheaper, more affordable, I thought it's not so far, not so close, it's an okay commute to back home, if I wanted to go back home.

The connection between schools and communities was an important financial factor in the college decisions of the participants.

Although many participants revealed their economic hardships in college,

participants did not comment on the socioeconomic barriers in their respective communities and schools during childhood, except for Sophia, Lori and Bianca who remember early on being cognizant of financial differences in their respective communities. Sophia knows her family did not have a lot of money, but she also realized there were other people with larger financial problems and perhaps was not as impacted by class issues:

> The neighborhood that I grew up in, there was a trailer park across the street, so I guess I was the kid that had more money because we lived in a house, but at the same time, we didn't because it was my grandparents so it wasn't anything like that.

Although Sophia grew up with a single mom who struggled to make ends meet, she felt fortunate to be living in a house. Similarly, Lori, who came from a low-income neighborhood, recognized that she had privileges that others in her community could not afford:

> Being Mexican, I knew I came from a low income environment or community and I could see where my family had a little bit more than other families, other Mexican families, where my mom could provide certain things for us, or not even her, but her sisters could take us out to go get things. So she had those resources where she could say well hey sis can you take the kids to Target to pick up all their school stuff and she could do it. We would have, every year, I would have like a new backpack, school shoes, new clothes, a pencil box, and everything was there. I didn't have to worry about having my school supplies provided for me. So, I did see that versus my friends who had more of a challenge getting their school supplies together. Well, maybe they didn't have them on time or they had to recycle some of the stuff from the years before. I could see that. That wasn't so much of a challenge for us. I could see that growing up.

Although Lori benefited from her aunts' financial generosity, Bianca talks about her parents' economic sacrifices, as well as her own:

> My dad was the only one who worked and he made back then, maybe $15,000 a year, $18,000 a year, depending on minimum wage. So, it was always him working by himself, my mother and six kids, so seven of us, always being limited

> to resources, couldn't spend much, or give us a dollar for allowance, or even going through high school. I had to work all through my high school years. I was actually playing sports, I loved basketball, however, my father said I need help, financial bills, we need you ladies to work, so leaving my passions, my hobbies to go to work. I worked in a grocery store my whole high school career. I only did basketball for two years, my freshman and sophomore years, and after that, I decided to let go of it, which I was very talented, most valuable player, and I wished to continue to play at college, university level, but that was one of the major obstacles, working. And avoiding stuff through school, come home, help my mother, and go back, the same routine every day, no fun with friends, no sleepovers, nothing like that, the same routine, but the biggest obstacle was work. My father would ask for half our pay that would go to him, so that we could help him out.

Many of the participants mentioned working in high school to help their families pay the bills, but no one, except for Lori and Bianca, referred to any specific financial issues in childhood. Because most of the participants came from lower socioeconomic neighborhoods, perhaps they didn't see or experience anything different from the other children around them or within the communities.

Summary

Most of the participants revealed their awareness of gender role expectations and how they were sometimes afforded less opportunities for socializing due to parental expectations for daughters to help out with housework and caring for younger siblings. These extra responsibilities occasionally interfered with their educational expectations as well as the expectation for daughters to stay close to home, even as young adults in college. Kristina, the only participant who did not mention gender inequities in her home, comes from a middle class background, and whose mom was a librarian. Surprisingly, only four participants commented on any racial issues in their educational experiences, and most of those concerns were regarding cultural identity and fitting in with peers. Due to participants' backgrounds, all of them faced economic hardship in

college; consequently, all of the participants besides Kristina, mentioned financial difficulties in college and being dependent on financial aid to complete college with the exception of Gloria who paid her own way through college and received some financial assistance from her parents.

Research Question 4

How do you think being the first in your family impacted your educational journey?

Familial and Personal Empowerment

Despite participants' feelings that their parents could not relate to their higher education experiences, many participants expressed how proud their parents were once they graduated. Many of the participants participated in both the general graduation ceremony as well as the Latino/a graduation ceremony where their language, culture, and families were celebrated. Gloria who mentioned previously that her parents really didn't understand or encourage her to go to college, discovered her families' pride at the Latino/a graduation ceremony:

> I did go to the Latino/a graduation ceremony and the regular school ceremony. I think this time around, my mom was much more proud than she was before (my Associates). Even though she always told me, we are not making you to do this. That really pushed me a lot to continue on with college. I knew I was doing something right, I knew I was doing something good for me. And my mom didn't really start encouraging me emotionally, but economically. They helped me pay some of the tuition and living expenses. But emotionally, not really, but they were more understanding economically. With that said, it didn't come out about how proud she was until the Latino/a graduation ceremony, it was a smaller ceremony. The school ceremony was kind of like 1 in 1000, there's so many people graduating the same day and criminal justice, human services is the biggest graduation. So for them, they were like, yeah you graduated, but because the Latino/a graduation because it was much smaller, it was more family oriented. My mom got to experience what other parents were experiencing. With her being able to relate to other people and seeing others reacting, she was much more proud. To me, it was something new, something I hadn't seen before. My brothers were also more proud of me the next day at the Latino/a ceremony.

Many participants reported their families' pride, particularly at their graduation ceremonies. Additionally, all of the participants expressed self-satisfaction as a result of being the first person in their families to achieve a collegiate degree.

These feelings of self-efficacy and accomplishment inspired the participants to dream bigger and to continue on in higher education to enter graduate programs. Half of the participants are currently enrolled in graduate school or teaching credential programs. All of the participants mentioned being role models to younger siblings as well as the younger Latino/a children in their communities. Isaura talks about how being first in her family to complete college impacted her family:

> It's a big accomplishment. I think it's more proud when I hear my little brother who also chose to attend Sacramento State. His girlfriend always tells me that your brother really looks up to you. I try not to, not any more, in high school, I would tell him you need to go to college, you need to do this application and he would be really lazy about it. That's something I don't understand sometimes, how I saw my parents, I wanted to over succeed that, their accomplishments. Now, my brother does want to over succeed me, education wise. But sometimes he did want to ask me for everything. I would tell him no you need to learn, if I was able to do it, you need to be able to do it. The same with my youngest brother, I recently had an interesting talk with him, because it's like I know he wants to follow what my brother and I did, but why don't you try to get a higher education than us and try to go someplace different. Not that Sacramento State is a bad school, it is a good school, but try to over succeed us.

Earlier in this chapter, participants revealed that they were motivated to succeed in higher education as a way of giving back to their families or their communities. Inspiration is one form of giving back to other family members to encourage them to follow their own dreams. Lori reveals how graduating college impacted her life:

> It gave me self-esteem and a better understanding of my place in the world and how the world puts you in your place. It helped me to be more creative and supportive of other individuals. It's helped me feel empowered to empower others to continue their education or just continuing whatever makes them feel good. It's helped me knowing that other people can do it. It was a struggle, there

> are huge barriers, and things here and there, it's possible and you just have to keep trying.

Sophia also talks about how her goal of completing a baccalaureate degree has changed her:

> I don't know, it just makes me think like I can do it, so I can do whatever I want now. I kind of feel like I got that big obstacle, I got the bachelors degree so I can go further if I want. I just didn't think it would actually happen, like I knew I always knew I would go to college, but once I graduated, it's totally different. But you feel like you can do anything now!

Like Sophia, the other participants all mentioned their increased self-confidence in accomplishing their goal of completing a collegiate degree; however, they also mentioned familial pride since many of the participants feel like they could not have done it without their parents' love and support.

Final Summary

The complexities of collective experiences and the intricacies of individual lives are fully captured in the participants' counterstories of their educational experiences. It is through these stories that one can gain an appreciation of the contradictions that can occur. Participants revealed that parents and peers were a source of motivation to complete their undergraduate degrees as well as a hindrance in accomplishing their educational goals. Parents were consistent in their emotional and verbal encouragement to do well in school and ultimately served as the primary reasons why participants completed their baccalaureate degrees. At the same time, participants also conveyed feelings of disappointment that parents could not assist them with tangible and practical knowledge of the college going process.

Peers sometimes filled in these experiential gaps with advice and motivation

on how to navigate the college system. At other times, peers were a source of frustration due to cliques or the inability to establish strong friendships. Additionally, participants discussed financial hardships, racism in schools, and cultural adjustments throughout the educational pipeline. Some participants also conveyed frustrations over traditional gender roles at home and how the extra household responsibilities took time away from their studies. Despite these obstacles, participants persevered in their quest to complete college due to parental emotional and verbal support, participants' internal drive to give back to their families or their own communities as well as culturally relevant school programs and resources. As a result of their accomplishments of being the first person in their families to complete an undergraduate degree, many participants felt a sense of familial and cultural pride. Participants also became empowered by their achievements and are now seeking ways to empower their own families and communities.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this qualitative research was to explore the successes and barriers throughout the educational pipeline for Latinas who are the first in their families to complete undergraduate degrees. No study to date has looked specifically at Latinas through each level of K-16 schooling. The intent of this study was to understand the complexities of gender, race and class issues that Latinas' face throughout their schooling and how they successfully completed baccalaureate degrees despite being first generation college students.

Looking at the confluence of gender, race, and class issues is complicated, which is why I have chosen counterstories as a strategy of inquiry and CRF as my theoretical rationale. CRF also offers women of color a discourse that reflects the multiplicities of distinctive experiences women of color have, while also examining the intersection of how gender and race reinterpret these multiple identities (Wing, 2003). The dialogues between the participants and myself served to examine the intersection of these multiple identities. Additionally, the participants were able to tell their stories about their educational and life experiences to help redefine Latinas' success in education. These counterstories emphasize the importance of people telling their own stories as a tool for challenging stereotypes about marginalized groups of people (Bernal, 1998). Many of the participants in the study thanked me for letting them tell their stories and felt reaffirmed in their educational success by voicing their accomplishments in school as well as exploring all of the hurdles they overcame along the way.

Discussion

The Contradictions of Barriers in The Educational Pipeline

As mentioned earlier in the previous section, all of the participants revealed the importance of parental influences on the success of their education; however, they also voiced their frustrations about their parents' lack of educational knowledge and advice. Rethinking barriers is key in understanding the complexities in familial relationships and how obstacles can ultimately be seen as positive motivation. For instance, economic struggles in obtaining a college degree was common for almost all of the participants and made it much more difficult for students to continue their education. Due to their lower socioeconomic backgrounds, participants were influenced by these circumstances to supersede their parents' educational status and seek a higher education that would ultimately bring them increased career opportunities. Many participants were tracked in their early schooling experiences and lacked the valuable information needed regarding the importance of taking college track classes. For some participants, peers were barriers due to not finding friends, high school cliques, or not fitting in with certain cultural groups. These complexities regarding parental and peer relationships are important in understanding how and why Latinas succeeded throughout the educational pipeline.

Parents' Lack of Educational Knowledge

Although participants benefited from the verbal encouragement and emotional support from their parents to continue on with their education, many participants revealed feeling disappointed that their parents could not help them with the practical advice and knowledge of how to apply and how to succeed in college. Participants' persistence in

the ability to overcome hardships is exemplified in the contradictions that can sometime occur within families and reveals the complexities of familial relationships. Parents were an overwhelmingly salient factor in participants ability to succeed in higher education, yet at the same time, some participants commented on the lack of connection between their parents and their college lives, and feeling that their parents could not relate to them. The disconnection of home life versus their new college lives are replicated in the findings by Rosas and Hamrick (2002) who confirmed that Latina females were frustrated by the inability to discuss coursework with their parents who had never attended college. The authors found that Latina college students were dissatisfied that they could not have a conversation with their parents regarding their classes and the issues and subjects that they discussed in classes. Also, Kimura-Walsh, Yamamura, Griffin, and Allen (2009) confirmed this in their research on college access for Latinas in schools. Latinas consistently commented on how their parents were a key element in inspiring them to continue their education; however, their parents could not give them the practical, tangible advice they needed.

Furthermore, some of the participants discussed their parents' inability to assist them in advocating for them in the school system. Some parents were not aware of problems with tracking in schools and the steps to take in seeking how to change their children's placement in certain classes and/or programs. Research by Lareau & Horvat (1999) revealed that white parents had more consistent contact and more comfortable relationships with teachers and administrators. If parents do not have the knowledge of how the education system works, then they are unable to advocate for their children.

Economic Hardships

Additionally, researchers have found that economically privileged students have a network of resources that help them get ahead academically (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). These students have access to valuable information throughout the educational pipeline due to their parents' knowledge of how educational institutions work and how to navigate administration, standardized testing, and how to apply to colleges and scholarships. Some of the participants in this study could not take the SAT test or only apply to one college due to testing fees or application fees. These participants were limited in their college choices since more prestigious universities require SAT scores and inevitably, they had only one college to choose from. Many participants remarked on how difficult college was because they had to constantly worry how they were going to pay for the next semester.

Participants continued to succeed despite these financial barriers due to their own parents' encouragement and how they fostered resiliency in their children. Watching their parents work hard under difficult circumstance inspired them to overcome their own obstacles. The feeling of seeing their parents transcend their own circumstances propelled participants to collectively have a sense of responsibility to themselves and their parents. These ideas of resiliency and responsibility will be fully discussed in the next section. Through their counterstories, participants revealed that they wanted to accomplish their higher education goals as a sign of respect to their parents for all of their hard work and sacrifices. These complicated barriers are important in comprehending the intricacies of familial relationships. Counterstories served as a vital tool in fully

capturing these complexities of how parental relationships as well as socioeconomic backgrounds can influence and motivate participants to succeed in education.

Lack of Information/Tracking

As mentioned previously in other sections, parents care and encourage their children's education, but if they do not have the knowledge of how the educational system works, it makes it difficult for them to inform or change issues such as tracking. Some participants remarked on their early educational experiences and knowing they were tracked; however, their parents did not know how to fix the problem or who to go to for help. Solórzano and Ornelas (2002) as well as, Yosso and Solórzano (2006) contend that Latino/a students continue to be tracked in lower level subject matter classes and/or vocational classes with the expectation that they are not going to college. College going classes are key to gaining important college information and credits to increase the chances of getting into universities. This in many ways sends the message to Latinos that college is not a viable option.

Factors That Contributed to Latinas' Success in School

Parents' Teaching Cultural Resiliency

Despite these obstacles, my research proves that it is the role of cultural resiliency that is fostered in families and communities that ultimately leads to collective responsibility. Participants were taught how to be culturally resilient by parents' verbal encouragement of the importance of education and by observing their own parents' tenacity to maintain their cultural values. Participants learned how to become cultural resilient, to resist life's challenges by watching their parents role model fortitude through

their work ethic and by fostering close familial and community ties. This cultural resiliency is reflected in the relationships between parents and children, where accomplishments inspire others to make changes within their families. This process is fluid and evident in how it manifested in some of the participants' stories, as participants became more educated, then their parents became more educated. For example, some participants' parents became knowledgeable about their own labor rights working in the fields through their children's increased education on social issues in college.

Additionally, the participants saw how hard their parents struggled and this influenced them to want to give back to their own families as a way of appreciating everything their parents had sacrificed for them. All of the participants in this research remarked on how their parents regardless of their individual circumstances highly influenced and motivated them to complete their undergraduate degrees. Some participants' parents worked as migrant farmworkers and urged their children to dream bigger, to become educated to escape physically arduous work and lead an easier, more financially stable life. Also, some participants grew up with single mothers who emphasized to them the importance of being independent and strong women. Participants' parents placed a high premium on education in an effort to teach them to rise above their circumstances to exceed in school and life.

This encouragement is echoed in other research that confirms that Latino/a parents gave their children determination and motivation to succeed in other ways. Yosso (2005) calls this aspirational capital where the cultural wealth of stories of struggles serves to inspire children to gain a better life. It is clear that all of the participants in this study had acquired Yosso's idea of aspirational capital from their

parents' values and verbal encouragement to succeed in school; however, aspirational capital does not completely explain how or why someone transcends their circumstances to persevere. Furthermore, Bettie (2003) discusses the role of parents and their influence on Mexican-American females. Many of the parents in this study valued education for their daughters, regardless of their own educational status.

Many of the participants who talked about parental influences, specifically mentioned the importance of their mothers' role in their academic success. These themes are replicated in a wealth of research that asserts that mothers' use of stories provided inspiration for Latino/a children to transcend obstacles in their education (Ceja, 2004; Gándara, 1995; Garcia, 2004; Valdés, 1996; Villenas, 2001; Villenas & Moreno, 2001). Other studies looked at how Latina mothers influenced and nurtured their daughters' education (Ceja, 2004; Gandara, 1995; Garcia, 2004; Garza, 1998; Gonzalez, Stoner, & Jovel, 2003).

Some participants in this study were encouraged by their single mothers to become independent and almost all participants talked about their moms' emotional encouragement and inspirational stories that helped them through difficult times. This is consistent with Marsiglia and Holleran's (1999) work that contends that Latina high school students most often look to their mothers as role models and how Latina mothers instilled the importance of education to their daughters in an effort to give them a better life. Additionally, three other studies by Garza (1998), Hernandez, Vargas-Lew, and Martinez (1994) and Wycoff (1996) contended the influence of mothers and their encouragement as being key factors in fostering success for Latinas in a college setting.

The counterstories in this study contribute new theories of resiliency in Latinas' educational success by examining the complexities of participants' barriers and determining the factors that motivated Latinas to excel in school. These stories and concepts show how Latinas continue to be impacted by these cultural lessons, not only through the educational pipeline, but also within their future careers and personal lives. My work replicates some of the important findings of mothers' influence on daughters and takes it a step farther by linking it with the idea of collective responsibility that illuminates how and why Latinas continue to be motivated to succeed by their families or mothers.

Giving Back to Families and Communities

Participants' parents greatly influenced them to succeed in school and in life. Participants were collectively inspired by their parents' use of verbal encouragement to gain a better life. Collective responsibility reflects the give and take of families who support one another in their dreams. This idea of collective responsibility is reflected in the following discussion of participants' altruism.

A motivating factor that influenced Latinas to succeed was in giving back to their families and communities. All of the participants in this study are currently seeking careers and/or graduate work that help others and most of the participants plan on specifically going back into their own communities to advocate for other Latino/as. This collective responsibility is born out of the drive from earlier parental teachings and values of cultural resiliency throughout their childhood. This mirrors other research that finds Latina women who wished to give back, not only towards their own peers or families, but also to the community in which they came (Bernal, 2001; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002).

Many of the participants expressed their desires to help out their parents financially or to provide verbal encouragement or information to their younger siblings in gaining a higher education. Additionally, Bernal (2001) found that Latina women seek careers where they can help people in their own communities. The majority of the participants in this study talked about their current graduate school programs and future career goals in working with Latino/a communities. They planned on using their bilingual skills and cultural knowledge to assist Latino/as in their hometowns. Additionally, they all wanted to give back to their own respective communities and enter a career that also would be personally rewarding to them.

School Resources

Besides parents and altruism, school resources such as teachers, counselors, or certain programs proved to be one of the biggest motivators for Latinas in this study. Half of the participants had a teacher whose extra attention and caring encouraged them to excel in school. There has been significant research that proves that Latino/a students can succeed in a school where there is mutual respect, high expectations, and caring exists (Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990; Valdes, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999). Furthermore, Valenzuela's (1999) work confirmed that Latino/a high school students suffered when teachers and administration did not value their education and treated them as inferior; consequently, the Latino/a students stopped caring about school.

A caring and nurturing classroom environment should not end as students reach adulthood. Although, there is research that a caring environment is imperative to students' success in elementary school through high school, it is equally important for that support and encouragement to continue in college classrooms. A poignant moment

for Lori as she struggled in a decade long journey to complete her college degree came from an e-mail from a caring professor who encouraged her to come back to school after a few absences. Words of support from teachers who value their students can make the difference between a student dropping out or deciding to remain in school, regardless of their age level.

Programs that nurture students' success also proved to be highly effective in motivating some of the participants to attend college and stay in college. A few participants were enrolled in high school programs that aided them in how to prepare and go to college. They claimed the programs gave them valuable practical advice on how to set themselves up for success for collegiate work. Additionally, the counselors provided a safe and supportive environment to encourage their college dreams. Furthermore, participants benefited from university programs such as EOP and CAMP that assisted them in the transition from high school to college by providing academic resources and a sense of community away from home.

All of these factors, teachers, counselors, and college retention programs assist Latinas in becoming culturally resilient and give them the necessary tools and emotional support to overcome barriers. Additionally, participants' knowledge of school resources continue to be passed on to younger siblings as a clear indication of collective responsibility to ensure the future success of other family members.

Peers as Invaluable Resources and Support

The majority of participants also felt that their peers were valuable resources throughout their education in encouraging them to do well in school and motivate them to apply to universities. Many participants consciously chose friends that were like-minded

and who were on the college going path. Barajas and Pierce (2001) found that Latinas were able to successfully navigate college by having supportive friendships and guidance with other Latinas on campus. Gándara (1995) found that almost all of the Chicano women she interviewed felt that student groups were instrumental in keeping them focused academically and connected by their relationships with others. A network of support from peers can also provide vital emotional support through difficult times as well as practical advice.

Whereas the previous research looked at cultural similarities of the students and how that impacted their success, other studies focused on class differences and how that actually aided Latinas in the college going process. A couple of participants in this study who grew up with in predominantly white upper class towns benefited from their peers' motivation to apply to universities as well as practical information. Stanton-Salazar's (1997) work affirms that some peers may act as institutional agents with information and resources to help their peers from lower socioeconomic neighborhoods, overcome educational obstacles. Additionally, Bettie (2003) contends that Mexican-American girls, who participated in sports, became friends with middle to upper class white peers and also benefited from counselors' and teachers' privileged attention that was normally reserved for white middle to upper class females. It appears that sports participation was vital for school administrators to view the Latinas through a more positive lens.

Educational stereotypes was evident in my participants' stories and relates to Flores-Gonzalez's (2002) work, the researcher discovered links between societal stereotypes and educational expectations from teachers and schools as well as peer pressure that influenced student identities. From these expectations, Flores-Gonzalez

found that many Latino/a high school students fit into a category of "stayer, leaver, or returner" (p. 23). These school and self-imposed stereotypes were used as a way to explain the differences in why students drop out of high school, return to school, or stay. Some participants, such as Lori, looked out for signs of a potential "leaver" in her group of friends and would discontinue a friendship if the person started to get into trouble. Other participants, like Sophia, remained with her group of "stayers" since they all had the same goals of doing well in school and attending college. Some of the participants were conscious of their own academic stereotypes in school through tracking or unnecessary placement in ESL classes that either hindered their performance or propelled them to do well in school.

Despite any negative stereotyping, participants rose above these challenges through network supports including family, school resources, and supportive peers. These groups created a climate of cultural resiliency by giving Latinas the tools and tangible strategies to succeed in school. Many of the participants developed strong high school friendships who influenced them to also have a collective responsibility towards one another, by supporting their friends to complete their educational goals by attending the same university, choosing colleges near their friends' schools, sharing living spaces, or by giving friends' vital college going information. This study confirms that friends helping friends to succeed in school is also determined by the concept of collective responsibility that ensures solidarity and the empowerment of others.

The Impact of Gender, Race, and Class Issues Through the Educational Pipeline

Female empowerment and traditional gender roles were reinforced in many participants' homes, sometimes within the same homes, which highlights the

complications that can occur when examining the intersection of gender, race, and class issues. Participants did not see race as an obstacle in their educational experiences. They identified particular racist encounters in schooling, yet most participants emphasized class inequities in their home life and throughout their education. Class appeared to be the most significant factor when participants discussed the barriers they faced throughout their education pipeline. Eight out of nine participants told stories of economic hardship growing up and how money was the main deterrent for them in attending and completing college. At the same time, their economic status also served as inspiration for them to transcend their circumstances to obtain a better life through higher education.

Female Empowerment

As mentioned previously in another section, participants stressed the importance of parental encouragement and support throughout the educational pipeline. One of the most important findings that my work reveals is that more than half of the participants talked about how their moms in particular were their main sources of inspiration and guidance. Mothers and other females in participants' lives embodied feminist principles by supporting the success of participants while sometimes discrediting traditional gender role expectations.

Many participants' mothers influenced their daughters' educational accomplishments through cultural resiliency by giving them verbal encouragement to excel in school, displaying emotional support through their educational obstacles, and advocating for them in their K-12 education. Additionally, some participants' were single mothers who taught their daughters to rise above obstacles to become self-

sufficient. Single mothers are refuting traditional gender roles and expectations, encouraging daughters to become independent Latinas. Society often views single mothers as a deficit, yet, through the counterstories of my participants, single mothers are seen as an asset. They impart female empowerment through teaching them how to be culturally resilient and the participants live up to these expectations as part of collective responsibility, a chance to repay their mothers back for their support and sacrifices.

In dual parent households, some participants reflected on how their mothers exemplified non-traditional roles at home. Both Elizabeth and Gabriela revealed that their mothers were progressive in their ideas of gender roles. Gabriela's mother would contest any attempts made by Gabriela's father to enforce traditional gender role expectations in the home. In Alejandra's case, she was the one who rejected traditional gender roles in her home by questioning her dad, which influenced Alejandra's mom to eventually rethink her marriage and ultimately leave her husband. Collective responsibility is reflected in the give and take of feminist influences between participants and their families.

Some of the participants recalled specific incidents of gender role expectations in the home, whether they were expected to clean the house, cook dinner, or take care of their younger siblings. They remembered feeling that these expectations were unfair, especially when their brothers were not expected to adhere to these same household responsibilities and were afforded more opportunities to play outside with their friends. Valenzuela (1999) found that many Mexican females had more household responsibilities and domestic chores at home. These parental teachings still can be seen as part of cultural resiliency. These gender roles reinforce traditional ideas of how to be good

wives and mothers, so that Latinas can become successful in their home lives as well. The ideas of collective responsibility is important here in Latino/a parents instilling important familial roles and the idea that Latinas are needed to complete domestic roles as their collective responsibility of the home and in their future roles as wives and mothers. Parents wanted to set their daughters up for successful and happy marriages.

Most of the participants' parents highly encouraged their daughters to pursue a higher education despite their views on gender roles in the home, but they did place pressure on their daughters to remain close to home. Gonzalez, Jovel, and Stoner (2004) found that parents of Latinas influenced their daughter to attend college; however, they also encouraged their daughters to stay close to home. Many participants made their college decisions based on economical and geographical concerns. They sought universities that were far enough away to gain independence and a little freedom, but close enough to afford them the ability to travel comfortably back and forth when necessary. Sometimes the tension of wanting freedom mixed with guilty feelings of not spending as much time at home caused feelings of conflict for Latinas (Diaz de Sabates, 2007; Gonzalez, Jovel, & Stoner, 2004). Some of my participants mentioned that they felt more guilty and pressured to attend a college closer to home due to these gendered expectations. Guilt about not spending enough time with family and wanting to be closer to family members appear to be more conducive to females. Women tend to be more nurturing and concerned about the welfare of others; therefore, their need to please others can be a contributing factor in the college decision-making process.

Females' nurturing and support of others was another key finding throughout the participants' counterstories. Looking at the data of other people besides family members

who inspired Latinas throughout the educational pipeline, the mentors are overwhelmingly female. Participants mentioned female academic advisors, counselors, teachers, professors, and friends who all contributed to the success of Latinas in this study. Same sex role models proved to be an important factor in providing the necessary support for Latinas. Additionally, many of those same mentors were Latinas, demonstrating the need for more Latina role models as counselors, teachers, and professors in educational systems. The participants also told stories of how their female friends inspired and motivated them to attend college, unifying them in a sense of female empowerment.

Latina peers and role models influenced the participants in this study to become strong independent Latinas, which then ultimately transcended to a collective responsibility to impart these ideas on other females. Many of the participants told stories about how they advocated for themselves in one way or another throughout the educational pipeline, whether it was to take honors classes, turning away friends were not on the college going track, or making the decision to attend college without the initial support of parents. Many participants with a sense of collective responsibility of female empowerment continue to advocate for their younger female siblings and/or other family members to succeed in school, so that they can gain a higher education as well. The idea of females helping females is instrumental in promoting female empowerment and necessary in deconstructing traditional gender role expectations.

Racial Discrimination

In addition to societal and parental gender stereotypes, almost all of the participants recalled racist incidents or encountering racial issues within their schools.

Wycoff (1996) discusses the implications of gender and race discrimination and how Latinas may have increased difficulties and hardships navigating the educational pipeline and succeeding in college based on this double discrimination. There has been extensive research regarding teacher bias and institutional racism (Katz, 1999; Niemann, 2001; Quiroz, 2001; Valencia & Black, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999). Aguilar (1996) also reveals that nearly half of Mexican American college females experienced sexism and racism. Yosso and Solórzano (2006) confirmed that Latino/as who are able to transfer to a four-year university are met with racial discrimination from peers and professors and a lack of resources and mentors to guide them through the college going process.

Although, participants did not signify race as a barrier throughout the educational pipeline, they did encounter racism in their schooling experiences. Participants told stories of being tracked throughout the educational pipeline, placed in unnecessary remedial classes or put in ESL classes, even when they could speak English well. These instances of institutional racism were so prevalent throughout their stories; however, many of the participants did not see race as a factor. Racial injustices in institutions may be harder to identify for young participants; whereas, growing up in a family where there is not enough money is a more tangible experience for children and young adults. Perhaps they did not see race as a barrier since it is common for parents of color to teach their children about racism and how to rise above these types of discriminatory practices. Parents impart these ideas of cultural resiliency so that their children can handle these situations effectively without losing their self-efficacy.

Socioeconomic Status Matters

All of the aforementioned gender and race issues are magnified by socioeconomic

issues. Many of the participants in this study revealed their economic hardships in their stories of trying to pass through the educational pipeline on the way to college. All of the participants, except for one, saw the lack of money as their biggest obstacle in attending a university or completing their baccalaureate degrees.

Stereotyping and discrimination of Latina females is compounded by socioeconomic status. Due to these negative stereotypes, children from lower socioeconomic neighborhoods are at a distinct disadvantage in learning and succeeding in education. Lareau and Horvat (1999) discuss how students of color are excluded and segregated in low ability reading groups because these students are expected to be in these groups regardless of their abilities. These negative stereotypes reflect and perpetuate the inequities of a larger society that keep students of lower socioeconomic status at a disadvantage in schools.

Socioeconomic status impacts success or failure in education and research supporting this remains evident in Bordieu's (1977) work. His important contribution of the concept of cultural capital takes reproduction theory to another level, by acknowledging the inherent information and skills that are passed from one generation to the next. Reproduction theories tend to support ideas that social class determines success or failure. Other research discounts these theories that socioeconomic class determines personal and educational success. Although, most of the participants in this study came from low-income families, their parents' hard work, sacrifices, and inspirational stories led them to transcend their socioeconomic circumstances to succeed in school. Therefore, this study also refutes Bordieu's earlier work of reproduction theory and cultural capital (white middle and upper class standards) since the participants in this

research prove that socioeconomic status is a factor, but not a defining factor since they were able to rise above their class circumstances to succeed in education despite being the first in their families to complete a baccalaureate degree. The reasons why the Latinas in my study succeeded was by having parents, peers, and school resources that positively influenced them by teaching or showing them cultural resiliency and female empowerment. Participants then demonstrated a sense of responsibility to live up those high academic and personal aspirations and continue to influence others in the same way.

The Complications of Gender, Race, and Class Issues

The previous section highlights the complexities of the intersection of gender, race, and class issues in society and education. Counterstories served to unpack the confluence of how participants were impacted by these obstacles. Many of the participants' stories conveyed polarizing issues throughout their educational experiences. For example, some participants had gender role expectations to help with household chores and take care of younger siblings. Females are traditionally expected to fulfill domestic roles; however, their socioeconomic status also contributed to these sex roles. Since participants' mothers were working long hours at sometimes physically demanding jobs, daughters were expected to help out at home. Gender and class issues influence daughters to fulfill these household roles out of necessity as well as traditional sex roles.

Gender and class expectations are also seen in participants' college making decisions and helping out the family financially. Participants decided on college locations based on proximity to their families and affordability. Females, due to their gender roles, have closer familial relationships. Many participants chose to attend community college first before transferring to a four year university based on wanting to

stay closer to home and the lowered costs of tuition, basing their decisions on gender and class considerations. Additionally, some participants decreased their workload at the collegiate level, so they could work more to contribute to their families' income. Females tend to be more nurturing and this transcends to the idea of collective responsibility in helping out family members who need financial assistance. In these examples, the convergence of gender ideals and class issues impact Latinas throughout the educational pipeline.

Many participants also experienced gender, race, and class discrimination in their educational journey. Institutional racism and gender discrimination is difficult to pinpoint since it is deeply embedded in societal and educational systems. Many participants discussed how they were tracked throughout the educational pipeline. It is difficult to discern if they were tracked due to race, class or gender discrimination or a combination of these factors. When Elizabeth tells the story of how school counselors push her and her Mexican peers to go to Yuba College, race discrimination is evident since the counselor is targeting Mexican students. What is unclear is if the school counselor also made some assumptions based on their working class backgrounds or had lowered expectations due to their sex. Some participants talked about how they were placed in ESL class despite their ability to speak English well. Race played a definite part in this discriminatory practice; however, it is difficult to know if gender or class impacted these decisions as well.

These are the limitations of analyzing gender, race, and class issues in society and education. Sometimes discrimination is overt, but most of the time there are more subtle influences of sexism and racism at work. In looking at counselors or teachers in

education, unless it is explicitly implied, one is not sure whether the bias in the classroom or tracking in schools is attributed to one of more prejudices of gender, race, and class. It is possible that many of the participants experienced triple discrimination of gender, race, and class inequities throughout the educational pipeline. Despite these complexities, counterstories served as a useful tool in gathering information on these complex issues.

Recommendations For Future Research

These intricacies of individual lives under the context and impact of gender, race, and class issues would not have been possible without the use of counterstories. It is clear to this researcher that this work and analysis would have been incomplete without the use of counterstories. Counterstories truly captured the contradictions embedded in the complexities of participants' collective experiences as well as the nuances of their unique individual experiences. Furthermore, their stories counter deficit thinking and stereotypes regarding Latinas and education. More research using counterstories as a tool is necessary to illuminate the complexities of gender, race, and class issues in education.

This study also repudiates other research regarding earlier work by Bordieu (1977) and Coleman (1988) whose ideologies of social capital and privilege are defining factors in obtaining success in life. However, this research also illuminates that although economics is a factor, it is not a defining factor in determining higher education completion rates. Further research needs to be done on Latinas specifically to gain knowledge of how gender, race, and class issues impact their educational experiences throughout the educational pipeline. Additionally, particular attention on research of Latinas in elementary school and middle would fill a gap in the educational literature.

Many of the participants discussed how their high school years were crucial in preparing them for college. Some participants talked about the lack of college going information were a deterrent for them. Many participants received vital information and resources for friends. These findings indicate a strong need for more support for Latinas and other groups of marginalized students who are the first in their families to go to college. Increased numbers of counselors and programs such as EOP in high school can fulfill this need, resulting in more underrepresented students attending universities.

Additionally, more work needs to be done in new theories of cultural resiliency and collective responsibility that I have found through this study. These ideas can bring new gendered perspectives into how and why Latinas complete baccalaureate degrees despite being the first people in their families to do so. My research elucidated that a strong network of female support helped the participants to succeed in school, including mothers, teachers, counselors, and peers. More research on female empowerment and females helping other females are necessary in understanding Latinas' academic success.

Conclusions

This research establishes insights into how and why the Latina participants in this study were able to transcend multiple obstacles to succeed in college. Throughout childhood, many participants' parents taught their children how to overcome race and socioeconomic barriers through their verbal encouragement, parents' stories of struggles, role modeling of a strong work ethic, parents' value of education, and parents motivating their children to have a more comfortable and financially stable life. In particular, mothers encouraged their daughters to become more independent by encouraging them to

go to college, refuting traditional gender roles, or by challenging sex roles in their own homes. Many participants had multiple female mentors and friends who nurtured their empowerment and academic success. This intricate web of female support all contributed to the cultural resilience in participants. Cultural resiliency gave participants the impetus to strive for success in education and also inspired a sense of collective responsibility to transcend all of the obstacles they faced throughout the educational pipeline. As college educated adults, the participants continue to be influenced by collective responsibility in their choice of careers, helping out their families and communities, and instilling the importance of higher education into their younger family members, friends, and peers in their respective communities. The importance of the findings in this research serves to link two prominent theories, cultural resiliency and collective responsibility to give a more comprehensive picture of how and why Latinas succeeded throughout the educational pipeline despite the inherent contradictions of gender, race, and class obstacles.

This work can serve as a useful tool for teachers and researchers to examine Latinas' cultural strengths that have proven to be beneficial in their successful completion of baccalaureate degrees. Also, theories of cultural resiliency and collective responsibility is applicable to other marginalized students of color and can aid researchers in gaining a better understanding on how and why first time college students succeed despite gender, race, and class barriers throughout the educational pipeline. Investigating the factors that led to Latinas' academic success can also provide alternative models or programs for schools to develop and emulate for future generations. It is my hope that future generations of Latinas can learn from the participants' individual and collective

experiences through the educational pipeline as motivation to transcend their own circumstances to achieve college success.

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APPENDIX A

EMAIL APPROVAL OF HUMAN SUBJECTS REQUEST

August 1, 2011

Dear Ms. Shaw:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your renewal request for human subjects approval regarding your study. Your renewal application has been approved by the committee. (IRBPHS#10-077). Please note the following:
1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file a renewal application.
2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS. Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.
3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.
If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091.
On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.
Sincerely,Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

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IRBPHS – University of San Francisco
Counseling Psychology Department
Education Building – Room 017
2130 Fulton Street
San Francisco, CA 94117-1080
(415) 422-6091 (Message)
(415) 422-5528 (Fax)
irbphs@usfca.edu

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http://www.usfca.edu/soe/students/irbphs/

APPENDIX B

CONSENT LETTER

June 1, 2011

Esteemed Student,

My name is Angela Shaw and I am a doctoral student at the University of San Francisco's International Multicultural Education Program. I am conducting a study that explores Latinas who are the first in their families to earn an undergraduate degree. I want to explore factors that led to your success and any barriers you had throughout the educational pipeline (K-16). As a Latina, I am passionate about this topic and I am interested in using your insights and experiences for my study.

Therefore, I am requesting your participation. There will be two steps to this process. The first face-to-face dialogue (approximately one hour) will stem from a couple of open-ended questions regarding your high school and college experiences. The second step will include turning in your journal of reflections of K-8 educational experiences (any stories during this time that shows what motivated you to do well in school or what factors placed barriers to your success). This time will also allow an opportunity for you to include any other experiences or stories regarding high school and college that you may have thought of after our initial conversation.

While there will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study, the anticipated benefit of this study is to provide a voice to your valuable educational experiences to inspire other Latinas and to contribute to the positive affirmations of successful Latinas in academic research. There will be no cost to you as a result of taking part in this study, nor will you be reimbursed for your participation in this study.

Participation in research is voluntary! You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point.

In conclusion, if you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail at ashaw@csus.edu or my doctoral advisor, Dr. Emma Fuentes at ehfuentes@usfca.edu. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Angela Shaw
Doctoral Student
University of San Francisco

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH SUBJECT

Purpose and Background

Ms. Angela Shaw, a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco is implementing a study on Latinas who are the first in their families to successfully complete their baccalaureate degrees. The focus is on the success and barriers Latinas' encountered throughout the educational pipeline (K-16). The researcher is interested in discovering why Latinas have succeeded in college and how gender, race, and class impacted that journey.

I am being asked to participate in this study because I am the first person in my family to graduate from college and I self-identify as a Latina/Chicana.

Procedures

If I agree to be a participant in this study, the following will happen:

1. I will participate in a dialogue with the researcher, which will encompass questions regarding my educational experiences in high school and college. A focus on how gender, race, and class affected these experiences will be included. The dialogue will be audio taped to ensure validity of text and information.
2. I will be asked to keep a Microsoft word document to capture stories and experiences from my early educational experiences (K-8) and this will be shared with the researcher.

Risks and/or Discomforts

1. Participation in research may mean a loss of confidentiality. Study records will be kept as confidential as is possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information and research will be coded and kept in locked files at all times. The researcher is the only person with access to these files.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to me from participating in this study. The anticipated benefit of this study is a better understanding of the effect of gender, race, and/or class issues and their impact on Latinas' success at the collegiate level.

Costs/Financial Considerations

There will be no financial costs to me as a result of taking part in this study.

Payment/Reimbursement

There will be no payment or reimbursement for your time and participation in this study.

Questions

If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail at ashaw@csus.edu. You may also reach my doctoral advisor, Dr. Emma Fuentes at ehfuentes@usfca.edu or at (415) 422-5078.

If you have further questions about the study, you may contact the IRBPHS at the University of San Francisco, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the IRBPHS office by calling (415) 422-6091 or by e-mailing them at IRBPHS@usfca.edu. Additionally, you may write to the IRBPHS, Department of Psychology, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA. 94117-1080.

Consent

I have been given a copy of the "Research Subject's Bill of Rights" and I have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. I am free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. My decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on my present or future status as a student or employee at USF.

My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

_____

Participant's Signature Date of Signature

_____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date of Signature